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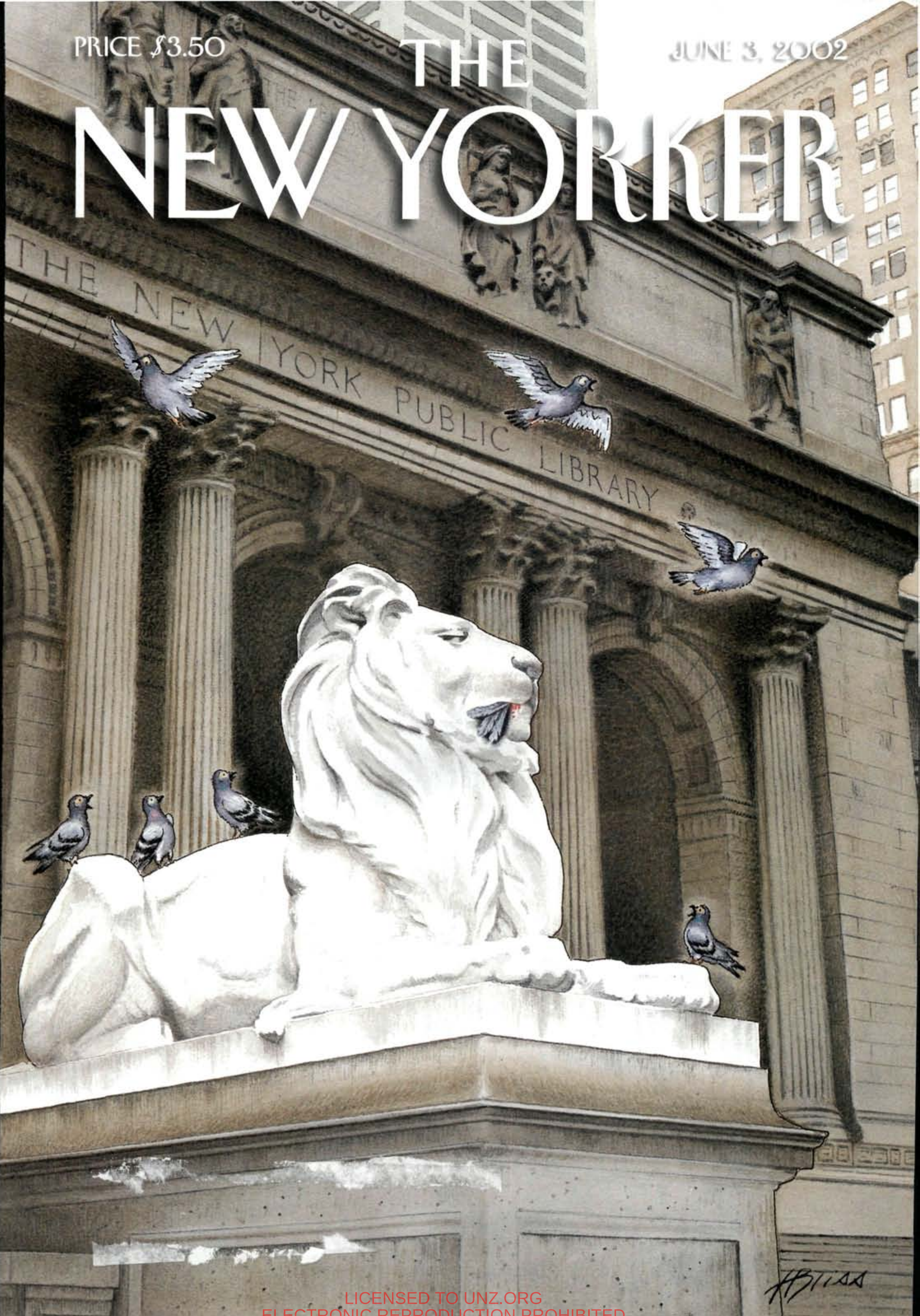

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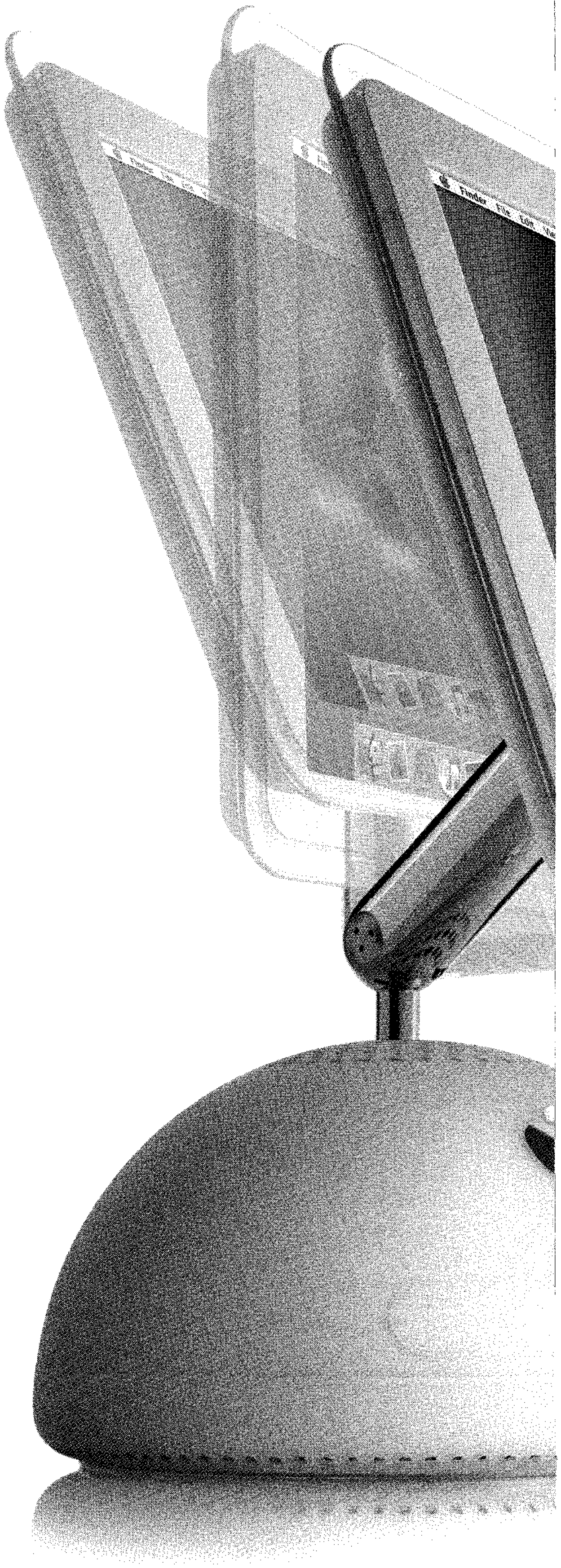

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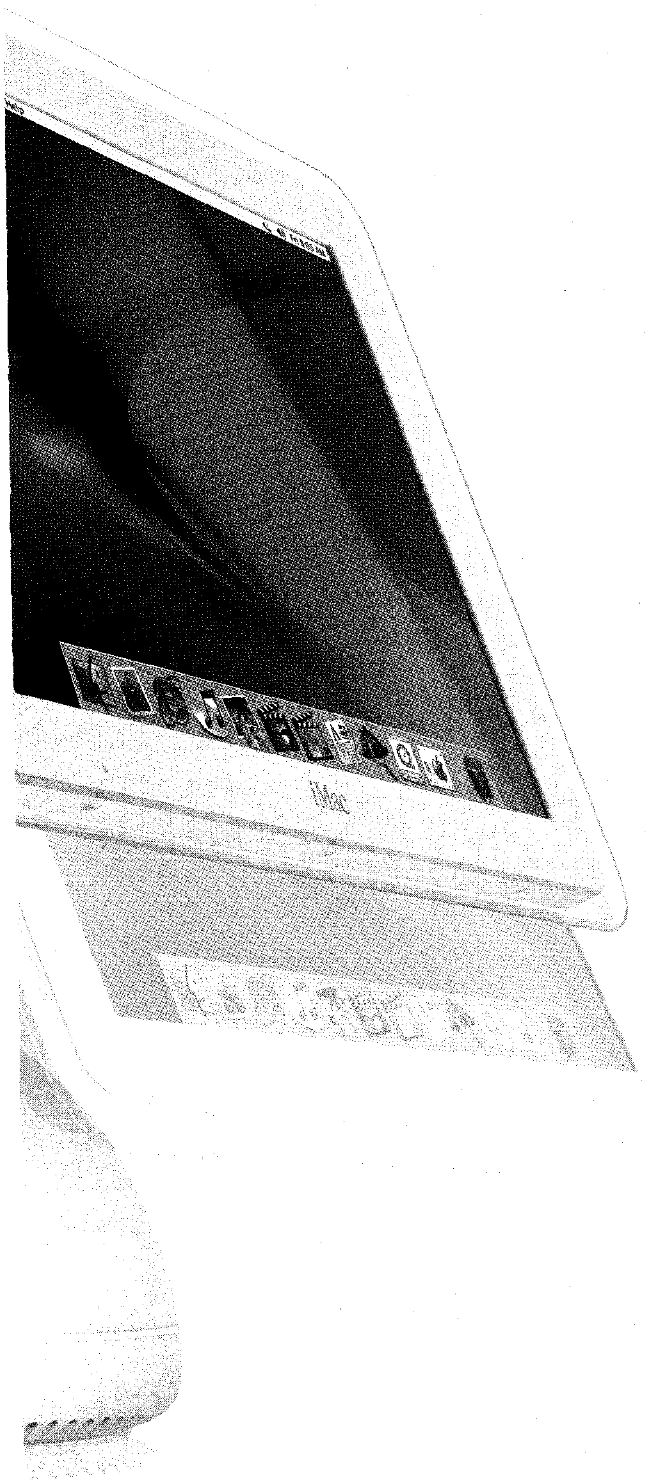

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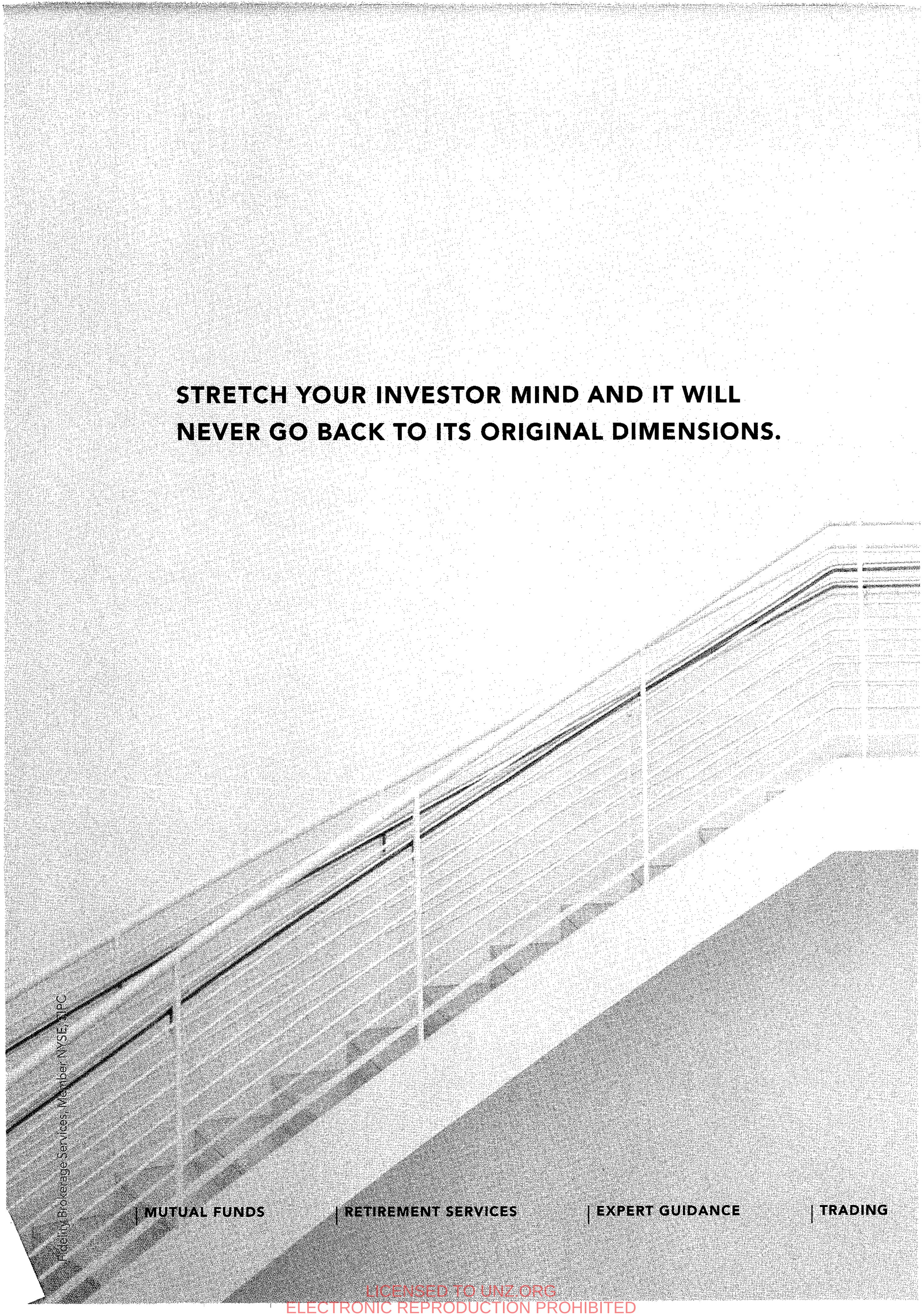
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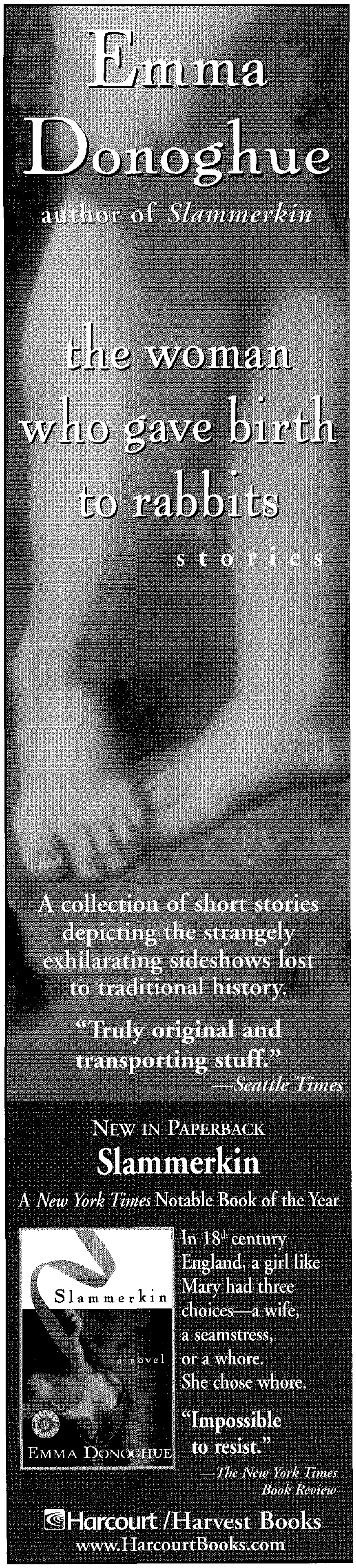

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Philip Gourevitch ("Wasteland," p. 58) has reported extensively from Africa. His book "A Cold Case" will be published in paperback this summer.

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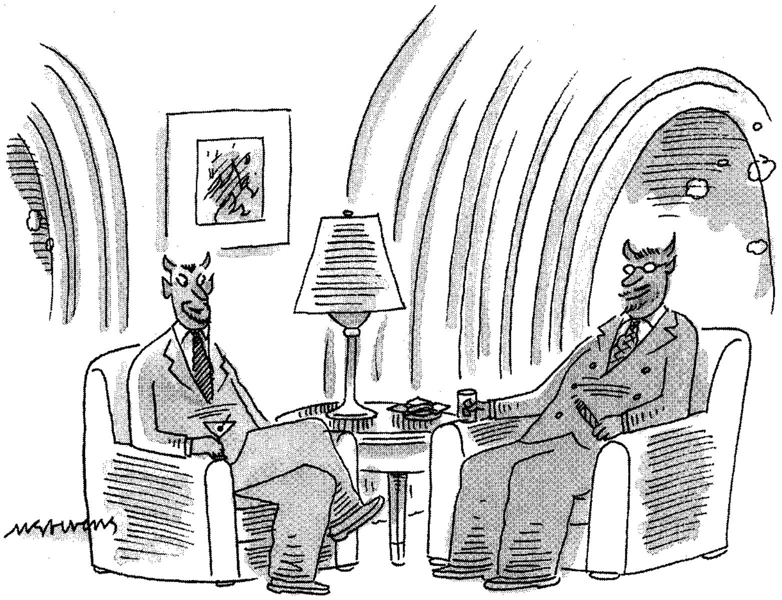

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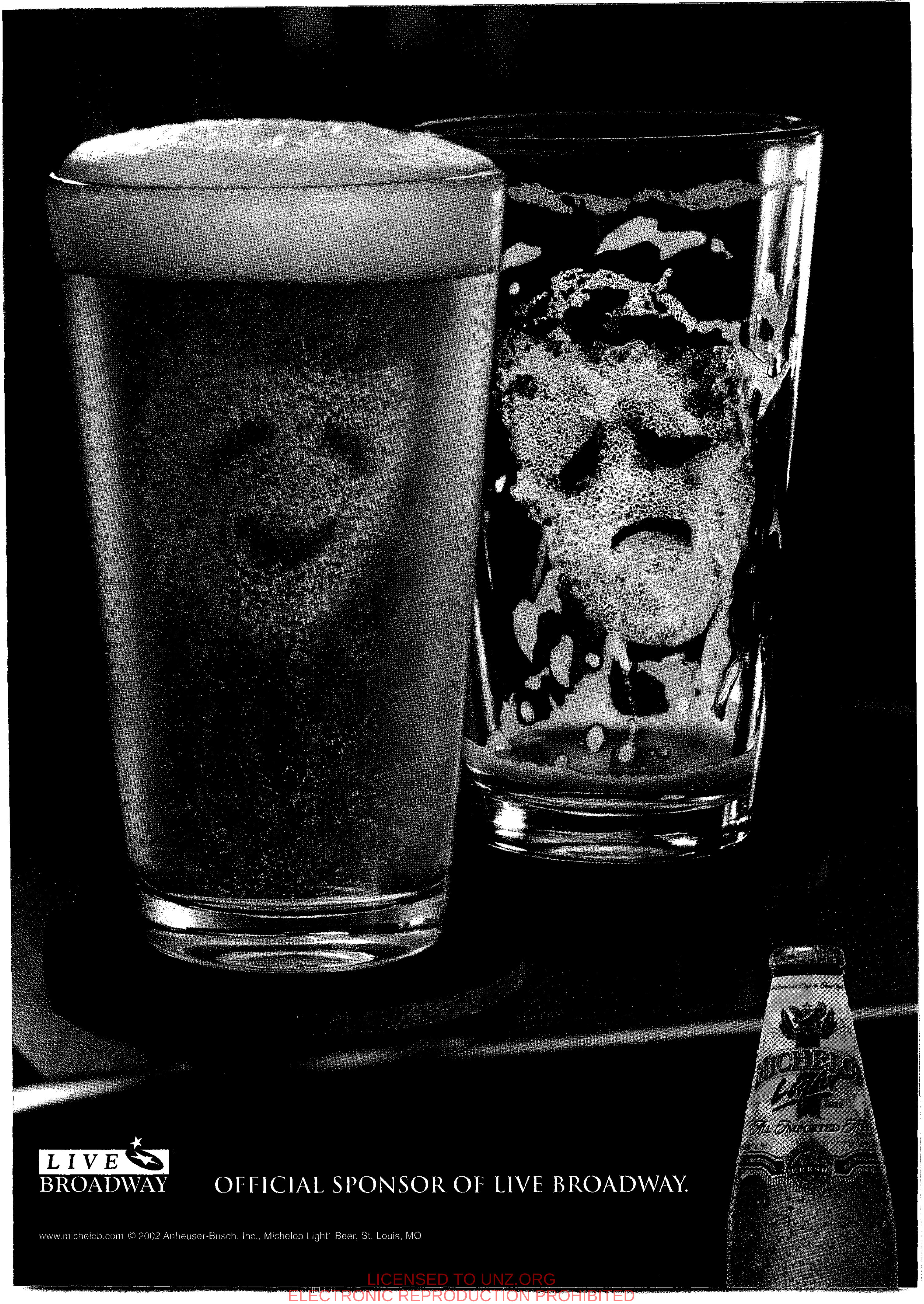
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PUNISHING SPEECH

Louis Menand recognizes that claims to academic freedom are grounded in First Amendment free-speech rights (The Talk of the Town, May 13th). But I would disagree with his assertion that attempts to sanction Professor Harris Mirkin and his university for an article he wrote—in which he argued that the criminalization of pedophilia was merely a social construct—were a "clear-cut violation of the principle of academic freedom." Some years ago, as a California Superior Court judge, I heard the petition of a probationary professor of criminology at Berkeley whose name had been withdrawn from the tenure list after he was arrested at one of the then frequent demonstrations at People's Park (the charges were later dismissed). He contended that his right to free speech was thus violated. In denying his petition, I wrote, "No freedom is absolute and even that which is 'free' has its price. . . . A worker is free to tell his employer what he thinks of his business judgment; but he should not count on a Christmas bonus. . . . The Constitutional right to talk nonsense does not include protection against being thought a fool"—or from being passed over for tenure. My decision was affirmed on appeal. Mirkin has tenure already, and a safe job. So what is his complaint? He has said that he sought to be "subversive," and he has succeeded.

Robert H. Kroninger
Inverness, Calif.

THE THREE HAMLETS

Ron Rosenbaum contrasts the old approach of Harold Jenkins, the editor of the second Arden edition of "Hamlet"—who melded the three conflicting extant texts of the play into a version that he believed was truest to Shakespeare's—with the new "generous" approach of his successors, who believe that readers should simply be given what amounts to the scholars' raw material to sift through ("Shakespeare in Rewrite," May 13th). Jenkins, who spent twenty-eight years on his Arden edition, made decisions about the text and offered arguments to support them. More important, he provided a reasonable version of the play which one could read without being plunged into the deep end of scholarly controversy. I'm afraid that the new, indecisive Arden "Hamlet," with its three texts one after the other, will confuse and intimidate readers and students, attracting a few nitpickers to Shakespeare-as-crossword-puzzle, while driving away many potential lovers of his plays. Just as when students are taught "literary theory" before they know much about particular works of literature, the new Arden may convince people that Shakespeare is only for experts.

David Bishop
Cambridge, Mass.

As a high-school and college English teacher, I have found practical ways to use the variant "Hamlet" texts that, as Rosenbaum writes, have given scholars such trouble. I let my students pore over quarto and folio texts from "Hamlet," "Romeo and Juliet," and "King Lear" as if they, too, were editors looking for the right version—except that there is no "right" answer. With their classmates, they discuss the choices open to them and select a version that they then can justify and perhaps perform. It's a pleasure to see seventeen-year-olds arguing among themselves and defending the use of a line or a word. Instead of feeling that only scholars—and high-school teachers—know everything there is to know about Shakespeare, students are empowered. They view filmed versions of a play with anticipation and excitement, just as Harold Jenkins, the Arden editor, did—to see if the director "got it right."

Michael LoMonico
Editor-in-Chief, Shakespeare Magazine
Stony Brook, N.Y.

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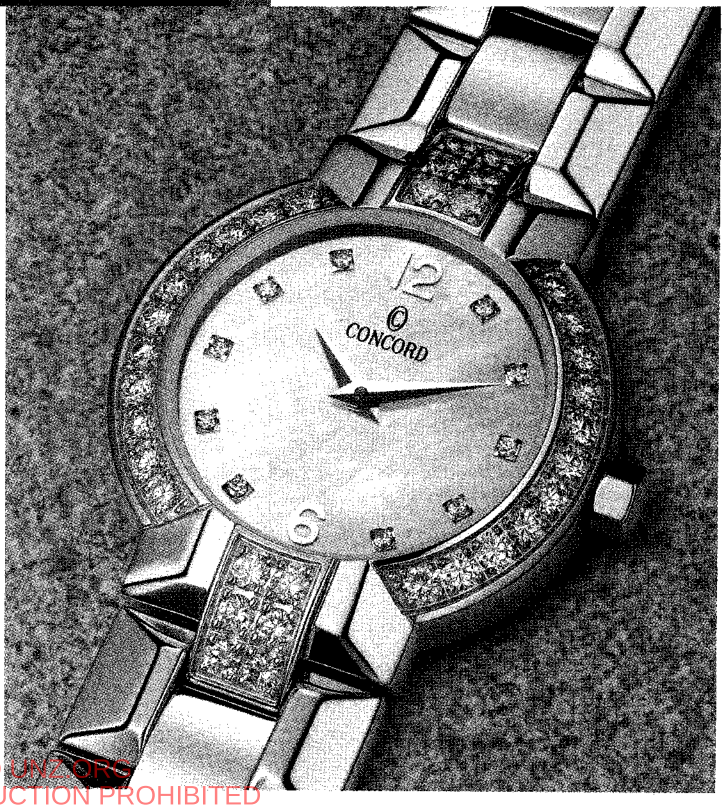

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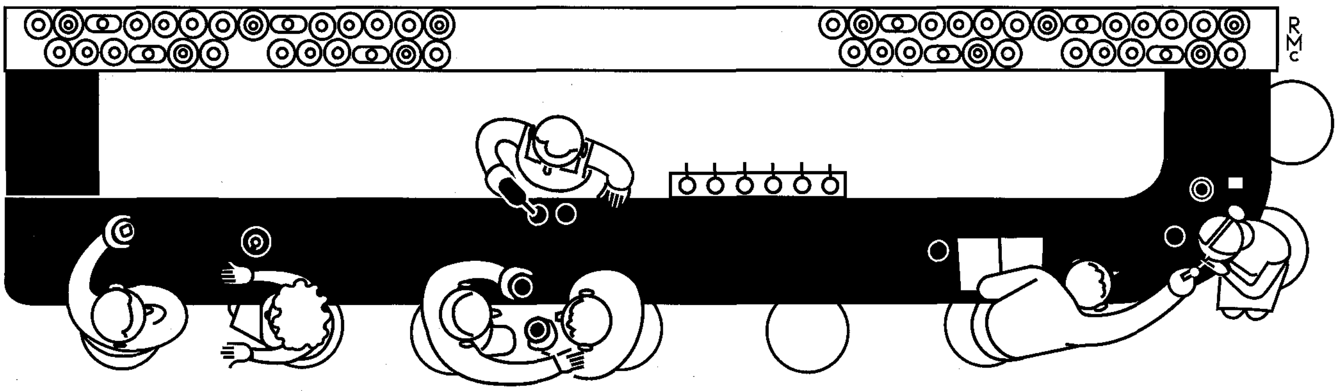

THE THEATRE
OPENINGS & PREVIEWS

Please call the phone number listed with the theatre for timetables and ticket information.

DEATH IN VENICE
A stage adaptation of Thomas Mann's 1912 novella, by Robert David McDonald. Previews begin June 4. (Manhattan Ensemble Theatre, 55 Mercer St. 239-6200.)

JOE AND BETTY
Murray Mednick's latest play, set in the Catskills in 1951. John Diehl and Annabelle Gurwitch star. In previews through June 1. Opens June 2 at 3. (Jose Quintero, 534 W. 42nd St. 244-7529.)

THIS THING OF DARKNESS
The Atlantic Theatre Company wraps up the season with a drama written by Craig Lucas and David Schulner. Preview on May 29. Opens May 30 at 8. (336 W. 20th St. 239-6200.)

OPENED RECENTLY

BOYS AND GIRLS
A gay man moves in with two lesbian friends to offer their son a male role model, in a new play by Tom Donaghy. Gerald Gutierrez is the director. (The Duke, 229 W. 42nd St. 239-6200.)

CAPITOL STEPS:
WHEN BUSH COMES TO SHOVE
The Washington, D.C., comedy troupe returns to New York with their latest satirical revue. (John Houseman, 450 W. 42nd St. 239-6200.)

THE CARPETBAGGER'S CHILDREN
Jean Stapleton, Hallie Foote, and Roberta Maxwell portray three daughters of a Union soldier, in Horton Foote's latest play. Michael Wilson is the director. (Reviewed in our issue of 9/10/01.) (Mitzi E. Newhouse, Lincoln Center. 239-6200.)

THE CRUCIBLE
A masterly revival by Richard Eyre of Arthur Miller's drama about the Salem witch-hunt of 1692, an allegory for the blacklisting delirium of the House Un-American Activities Committee. It stars the expert Laura Linney and Liam Neeson, who is a force of nature. (3/18/02) (Virginia, 245 W. 52nd St. 239-6200.)

THE ELEPHANT MAN
Thanks to the 1980 David Lynch movie, just about everyone is familiar with the story of Victorian London's John Merrick, the Elephant Man, whose grotesque deformity took him from a cruel life in freak shows to a less cruel life among the medical community and the curious upper crust. Bernard Pomerance's 1979 play came first; today it seems a bit didactic, but it is still very moving, and the issues that it raises—about faith, colonialism, charity, sexuality—are just as thought provoking. Billy Crudup does a wonderful job as Merrick, a role played without the aid of theatrical prosthetics, and so does Rupert Graves as Frederick Treves, the surgeon who takes him in. Sean Mathias is the director. (Royale, 242 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

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ENSEMBLE STUDIO THEATRE
Series B in this year's six-week marathon of one-acts continues through June 2 with plays by Bill Bozzone, Roger Heddon, Horton Foote, and Dan O'Brien. The marathon continues through June 16. (549 W. 52nd St. 247-4982.)

A FEW STOUT INDIVIDUALS
John Guare's new dark comedy is full of his typical wit and intelligence, but it's also unfocussed and preachy. It uses Ulysses S. Grant's plight at the end of his life—broke, dying of cancer, and addicted to painkillers, he's trying to finish his memoirs so he can leave his family some money—as madcap fodder for examining the mercurial nature of the American memory. Most of the time, Grant can't recall a thing, and the play is built around the repeated (and clearly manipulative) encouragement he gets from his doting but oblivious wife and feckless kids; his secretary and eventual biographer, Adam Badeau; Mr. Mark Twain (who eventually published Grant's two-volume book); and the Emperor and Empress of Japan, among others. Under the direction of Michael Greif, the performances are excellent—but did somebody forget to hire a dramaturge? (Signature, 555 W. 42nd St. 244-7529. Closes June 9.)

FOOL FOR LOVE
Tim Corcoran's precise, insightful direction is the heart of this revival of Sam Shepard's 1983 play about a misbegotten love. Though there is unfortunately little chemistry between the two leads, the evening's power lies mainly in the monologues, which are superb. (29th Street Rep, 212 W. 29th St. 206-1515.)

FORTUNE'S FOOL
Turgenev's little-known 1848 play, set at a Russian country estate, stars Alan Bates as a down-on-his-luck gentleman living there and Frank Langella as his wealthy, arrogant neighbor. Just as their characters represent the gamut of the negative qualities of the ruling class, Langella and Bates seem to use up all the acting possibilities in the play as they goad and react to each other; from the moment they first appear on the stage together, it becomes almost unnecessary for anyone else to be present, so completely do they dominate the evening. Directed by Arthur Penn. (4/15/02) (Music Box, 239 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

THE GOAT; OR, WHO IS SYLVIA?
Edward Albee's ninety-minute anecdote about a happily married, successful architect who falls in love with a goat called Sylvia. It takes all of Albee's expertise to tease this joke into an evening; but it allows Mercedes Ruehl some hilarious moments of high dudgeon as she trashes the house and her husband (Bill Pullman) for "cruising livestock." David Esbjornson is the director. (Golden, 252 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

THE GODFADDA WORKOUT
A one-man show written and performed by Seth Isler. (American Place, 111 W. 46th St. 239-6200.)

THE GRADUATE
This pointless production, starring Kathleen Turner as Mrs. Robinson, is endless and full of dead air. There are exactly two pleasures here: Victor Slezak, as Mr. Robinson, and Murphy Guyer, as Benjamin's father; they depict beautifully the anger and anxiety that underlie their postwar poolside bonhomie. Terry Johnson, who directed, adapted the novel and the screenplay, and we'll never understand why. (4/15/02) (Plymouth, 236 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

THE GUYS
A dialogue between a fire captain named Nick, who lost eight of his men on September 11th, and Joan, an editor who helps him prepare their eulogies, written by Anne Nelson, a journalist, and directed by Jim Simpson, the Flea Theatre's artistic director. It's an artful and moving re-creation of the relationships New Yorkers formed as a result of that day—of the way that people "jumped tracks" and suddenly saw into each other's lives. (Nelson herself assisted a fire captain in writing some eulogies, and the play grew out of that experience.) It's an admirable tribute to the men who died and an articulate rendering of the way that one woman dealt with her "beautiful, gleaming, wounded city." (The Flea, 41 White St. 226-2407.)

HOUSE AND GARDEN
A pair of conjoined plays by Alan Ayckbourn, performed simultaneously on two stages. John Tillinger is the director. (Reviewed in this issue.) (Manhattan Theatre Club, at City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-1212.)

INTO THE WOODS
Stephen Sondheim and James Lapine's 1987 fairy-tale-derived musical weaves together the stories of Cinderella, Little Red Riding Hood, Jack and the Beanstalk, and Rapunzel. But it isn't so much a rethinking of fairy tales as it is a parable about growing up and finding your place in the community, and about learning to live with uncertainty and ambivalence. In the first act, we see wishes coming true, and in the second we see the consequences of those wishes. The archetypal material is treated with suitable di-

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rectness and simplicity, and yet the show lacks none of the intelligence or emotional honesty we expect from Sondheim. The generally fine cast includes Vanessa Williams, who is vivid and sympathetic as the ghastly-looking witch who sets the plot in motion; the lovely-voiced Laura Benanti, as Cinderella; and John McMartin, as the narrator. Mr. Lapine is the director. (5/13/02) (Broadhurst, 235 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

THE LAST SUPPER

The playwright Ed Schmidt, who got himself ordained as a minister in the Universal Life Church and installed pews in the kitchen of his own home, cooks and serves dinner for an audience of twelve ("honest-to-God dinner theatre") while subjecting them to a ranting meditation on what really went down at the Last Supper. Given Schmidt's doubts about his religion (he's a lapsed Catholic), his show, which brings to mind both Julia Child and Spalding Gray, is a surprisingly spirited attempt at making the Host palatable to contemporary audiences. (410 16th St., Brooklyn. 718-499-7758.)

THE MAN WHO HAD ALL THE LUCK

In this beautifully cast production of Arthur Miller's 1944 play, the terrific actors, under the direction of Scott Ellis, illuminate the drama as fully as it is possible to do. A young auto mechanic named David Beeves (Chris O'Donnell) can't accept his good fortune in life, because he doesn't think he's done anything to deserve it. Living rebukes are all around him: his older brother, Amos (Ryan Shively), a talented baseball player, can't get a break; a better mechanic (the very touching Sam Robards) comes to town to set up shop and ends up working for David; a neighbor (Dan Moran) has been left wheelchair-bound by a freak accident. The play asks whether what happens to us is the result of character or luck, and whether character itself is a matter of luck, but it doesn't try to answer the question, which is why, after fifty-eight years, the work still has plenty of life in it. (5/13/02) (American Airlines Theatre, 227 W. 42nd St. 719-1300.)

METAMORPHOSES

Ovid's tales, loosely adapted and directed by Mary Zimmerman, who has had the ingenious idea of staging the caprice of the gods in a swimming pool. The production is fun and full of wonder, but it illustrates rather than dramatizes psychic struggle. The show's gimmick, the pool, turns out to be its metaphor—refreshing and shallow. (3/18/02) (Circle in the Square, 50th St. west of Broadway. 239-6200.)

MORNING'S AT SEVEN

The question all of the characters in this revival of Paul Osborne's 1939 back-porch drama ask one way or another is: What am I going to do with my life? It's bland stuff, sort of Chekhov light, but the pleasing all-star cast puts this rickety workhorse through its paces. Directed by Daniel Sullivan. (Lyceum, 149 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

THE ODYSSEY

Derek Walcott's adaptation of Homer's epic poem, in a Willow Cabin Theatre Company production. (St. Clement's, 423 W. 46th St. 279-4200. Closes June 2.)

OKLAHOMA!

There are stupendous pleasures in the Royal National Theatre's version of Rodgers and Hammerstein's 1943 American classic. Many of them are due to the high-spirited, humorous choreography of Susan Stroman, and to Anthony Ward's picturesque set. But technique, which can make a show work, is not enough to make it wonderful. (4/1/02) (Gershwin, 51st St. west of Broadway. 307-4100.)

ONE SHOT, ONE KILL

Richard Vetere's play is set at the U.S. Marine base in Quantico, Virginia. (Primary Stages, 354 W. 45th St. 333-4052. Closes June 23.)

PIGTOWN

A charming, vivacious production of a far less successful script about life in Limerick throughout the twentieth century. Although the playwright, Mike Finn, has a good ear for the telling turn of phrase, his characters are stereotypes, his show has little momentum, and the only thing we learn about the history of Limerick is that pork butchering was once a significant industry. Nonetheless, under Charlotte Moore's brilliant direction, the splendid cast makes the most of it. (Irish Rep, 132 W. 22nd St. 727-2737. Closes June 9.)

PRIVATE LIVES

In Noël Coward's comedy of bad manners, two wonderful actors, Alan Rickman and Lindsay Duncan, play the embattled exes Elyot and Amanda—dandies of detachment who jilt their new spouses and run away together to a Parisian love nest. They have a field day with Coward's nuanced silences, with all the verbal tics and physical revelations of repressed feeling. Howard Davies's radical notion is to play Elyot and Amanda's physical passion for real, rather than opting for the standard notional sexual allure. This allows him to capitalize on the wonderful chemistry between Rickman and Duncan, but it also throws the comedy weirdly off kilter. (5/6/02) (Richard Rodgers, 226 W. 46th St. 307-4100.)

QED

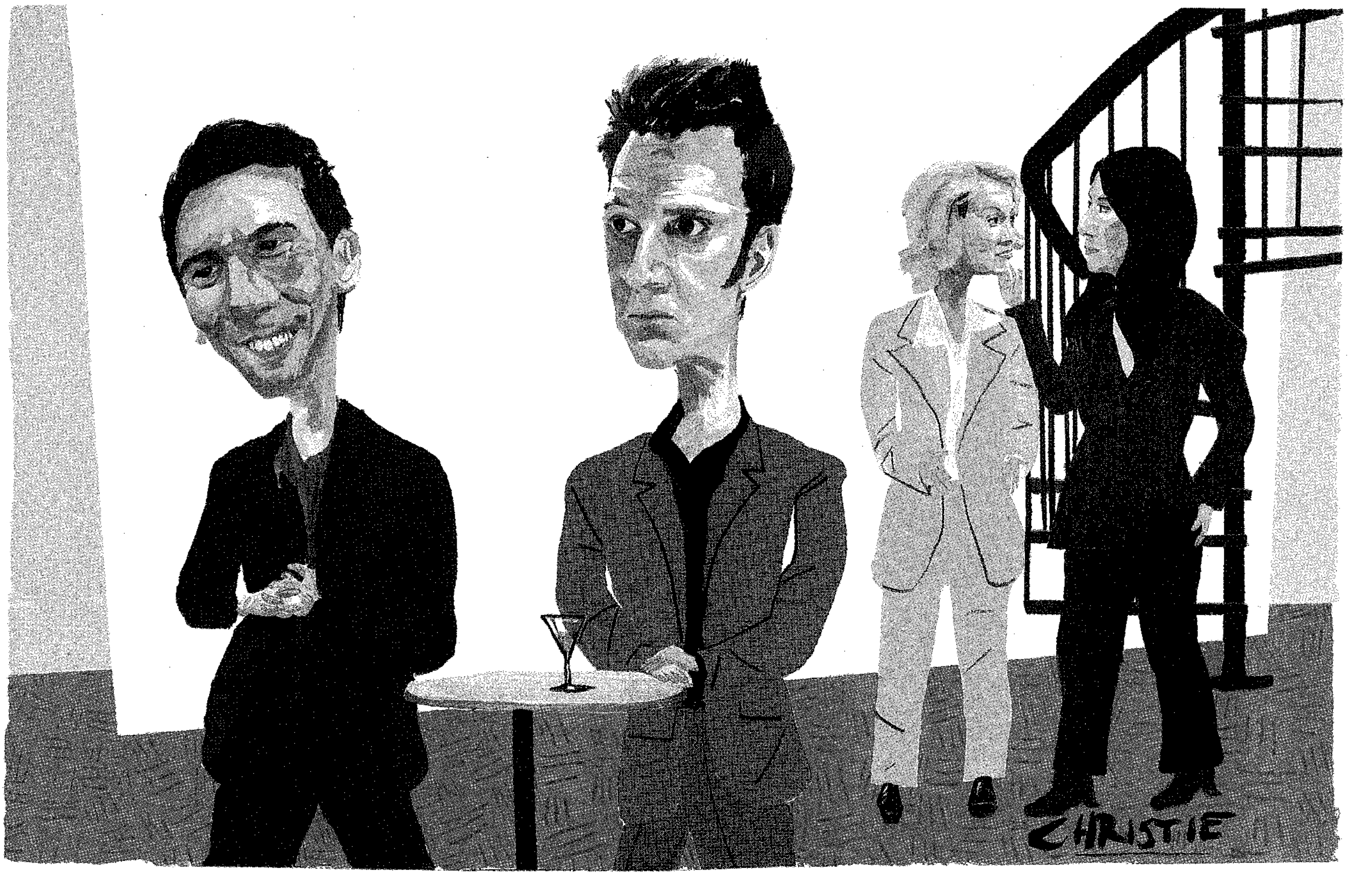
Peter Parnell's play, starring Alan Alda as the physicist Richard Feynman, buzzes with life. Set in 1986, it takes us through an afternoon and evening in Feynman's office at Caltech, where he talks about such subjects as photons, drumming, the Manhattan Project, cancer, and "South Pacific." Alda's performance is one of utter charm. Sundays and Mondays only. (11/26/01) (Vivian Beaumont, Lincoln Center. 239-6200. Closes June 10.)

REBEL WITHOUT A PAUSE: UNRESTRAINED REFLECTIONS ON SEPTEMBER 11TH

The monologuist known as Reno offers her thoughts on New York in the aftermath of the World Trade Center attacks. (The Zipper, 336 W. 37th St. 239-6200.)

RICKY JAY: ON THE STEM

The master magician's tribute to the flimflammery and weird entertainments that have cropped up over the years along the length of Broadway, "the stem that winds the watch" of New York City. Working six hundred and forty-two steps (he counted them) from the flea museum that used to be in Times Square, Jay re-creates such flea feats as Ophelia's death and Samson's destruction of the Temple of the Philistines. There are also card tricks that amaze and astonish, all performed with a charming smile by the president of the international brotherhood of snake-oil salesmen. Prepare to be happily hornswoggled.



Robert Sella, Malcolm Gets, Carrie Preston, and Nadia Dajani, in "Boys and Girls," by Tom Donaghy.

R. GREGORY CHRISTIE

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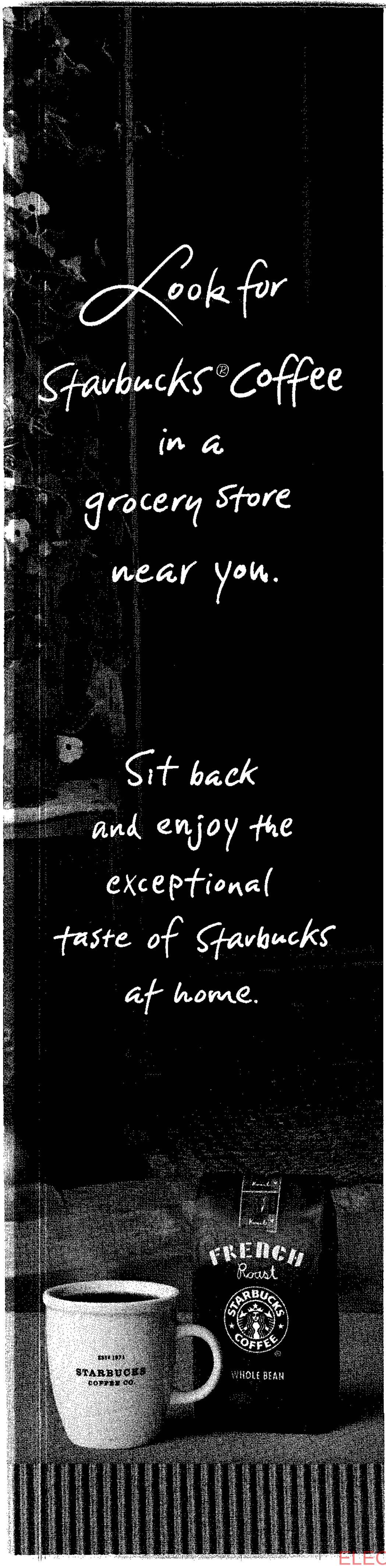


(Note: Jay has decreed that no one under sixteen will be admitted to his show.) Directed by David Mamet. (Second Stage, 307 W. 43rd St. 246-4422.)

ROOM
Classic Stage Company wraps up the season with a solo performance piece based on the writings of Virginia Woolf. (136 E. 13th St. 677-4210, ext. 2. Closes June 16.)

THE SANDMAN
Target Margin Theatre's new opera is typical of the company's smart, knowing way with classics. It offers a moving version of E. T. A. Hoffmann's story about a young man haunted by his father's death. It's also a funny deconstruction of how operas are put together. Under the gifted direction of David Herskovits, the performances and voices are strong. (Connelly Theatre, 220 E. 4th St. 358-3657. Closes June 1.)

SELF-DEFENSE; OR, DEATH OF SOME SALESMEN
Carson Kreitzer's drama is based on the true story of a Florida prostitute and serial killer. (HERE, 145 Sixth Ave., at Spring St. 647-0202.)

SMELLING A RAT
The New Group takes on another Mike Leigh play, about a successful exterminator. (Samuel Beckett, 410 W. 42nd St. 279-4200.)

SURVIVING GRACE
A play by Trish Vradenburg, about a fraught mother-and-daughter relationship. Jack Hofsiss directs. (Union Square Theatre, 100 E. 17th St. 307-7171.)

SWEET SMELL OF SUCCESS
At first glance, this new musical, adapted from the excellent Clifford Odets–Ernest Lehman movie (1957) by a high-powered artistic team headed by the director Nicholas Hytner, seems to have got it right. Unfortunately, the wit of John Guare's book is not sustained in Marvin Hamlisch's soft, undistinguished score and Craig Carnelia's flat lyrics. (3/25/02) (Martin Beck, 302 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

THE TEMPEST
Shakespeare's play, staged by the Epiphany Theatre Company. (154 Christopher St. 206-1515.)

THOROUGHLY MODERN MILLIE
A 1967 Hollywood version of the Roaring Twenties—which starred Julie Andrews as an ingenue flapper who comes to New York City, finds true love, and helps break up a Chinese-run white-slavery ring—reimagined for the stage in 2002. Just like the movie, it's supposed to be all madcap Jazz Age fizziness, but the harder the cast sings and dances, the flatter the enterprise falls. The colors seem garish rather than gay, the manic energy feels forced at gunpoint, and the only thing you recall about Sutton Foster's Millie after you leave the theatre is her huge white teeth and bouncy black bob. Call it thoroughly boring, shrilly. (Marquis, Broadway at 45th St. 307-4100.)

TOPDOG/UNDERDOG
The Public Theatre's production of Suzan-Lori Parks's play has moved to Broadway, starring Jeffrey Wright and Mos Def. George C. Wolfe is the director. (Ambassador, 219 W. 49th St. 239-6200.)

21 DOG YEARS: DOING TIME@AMAZON.COM
In his solo show, Mike Daisey exposes life at the online giant during its early years. (Cherry Lane, 38 Commerce St. 239-6200.)

VIENNA: LUSTHAUS (REVISITED)
In this splendid revival of Martha Clarke's 1986 dance-theatre piece, inspired by the psychosexual steaminess of fin-de-siècle Vienna, a handsome troupe of dancers, sometimes clothed in the style of characters in a Schnitzler play, sometimes unclothed in the style of figures in a Schiele painting, enact various states of alienation and desire in a gauzy atmosphere charged with premonitions of the Second World War. The actors intone Charles L. Mee's cryptic scraps of monologue, taken in part from the notebooks of Freud; the musicians play plangent scraps of music composed by Richard Peaslee. Inexorably, the whole thing gets to you like a beautiful, bad dream. (New York Theatre Workshop, 79 E. 4th St. 239-6200. Closes June 2.)

LONG RUNS

AIDA
Palace, Broadway at 47th St. 307-4747.

BEAUTY AND THE BEAST
Lunt-Fontanne, 205 W. 46th St. 307-4747.

BLUE MAN GROUP/TUBES
Astor Place Theatre, 434 Lafayette St. 254-4370.

CABARET
Studio 54, at 254 W. 54th St. 239-6200.

CHICAGO
Shubert, 225 W. 44th St. 239-6200.

THE COMPLETE WORKS OF WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE (ABRIDGED)
Century Center, 111 E. 15th St. 239-6200.

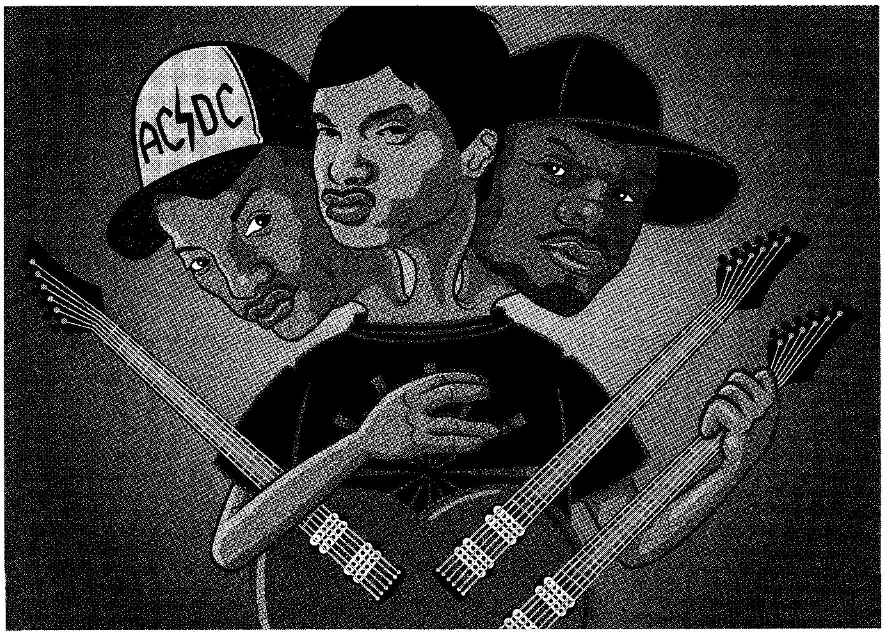
CONTACT
Vivian Beaumont, Lincoln Center. 239-6200.

DE LA GUARDA
Daryl Roth, 20 Union Sq. E., at 15th St. 239-6200.

FORBIDDEN BROADWAY: 20TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION
Douglas Fairbanks, 432 W. 42nd St. 239-6200.

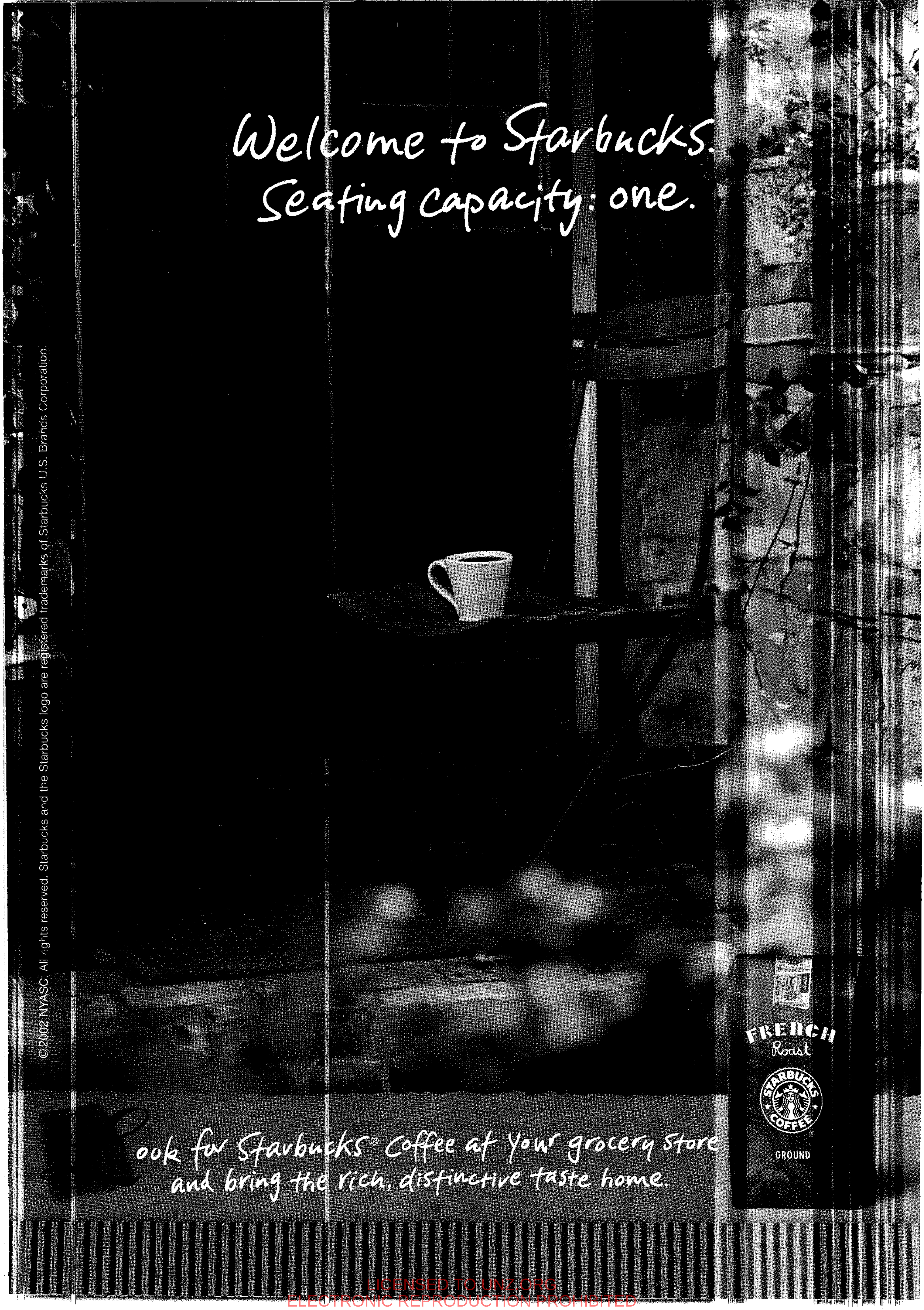
42ND STREET
Ford Center, 213 W. 42nd St. 307-4100.

THE FULL MONTY
Eugene O'Neill, 230 W. 49th St. 239-6200.



MICHAEL WELDON

N.E.R.D., performing at Irving Plaza this week (see Night Life—Clubs).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"The Doll," taken last spring in London as part of Tina Barney's series "The English," at Borden (see Photography).

I LOVE YOU, YOU'RE PERFECT, NOW CHANGE
Westside, 407 W. 43rd St. 239-6200.
THE LION KING
New Amsterdam, 214 W. 42nd St. 307-4100.
LES MISÉRABLES
Imperial, 249 W. 45th St. 239-6200.
LOVE, JANIS
Village Theatre, 158 Bleecker St. 307-4100.
PERFECT CRIME
Duffy, 1553 Broadway, at 46th St. 695-3401.
THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA
Majestic, 245 W. 44th St. 239-6200.
THE PRODUCERS
St. James, 246 W. 44th St. 239-6200.
PROOF
Walter Kerr, 219 W. 48th St. 239-6200.
PUPPETRY OF THE PENIS
John Houseman, 450 W. 42nd St. 239-6200.
RENT
Nederlander, 208 W. 41st St. 921-8000.
STOMP
Orpheum, 126 Second Ave., at 8th St. 477-2477.
THE SYRINGA TREE
Playhouse 91, at 316 E. 91st St. 307-4100. (Closes June 2.)
THE TALE OF THE ALLERGIST'S WIFE
Ethel Barrymore, 243 W. 47th St. 239-6200.
TONY N' TINA'S WEDDING
St. Luke's Church, 308 W. 46th St. 239-6200.
URINETOWN
Henry Miller, 124 W. 43rd St. 239-6200.
THE VAGINA MONOLOGUES
Westside, 407 W. 43rd St. 239-6200.

DANCE

NEW YORK CITY BALLET
May 29 at 8: "Chiaroscuro," excerpts from the Diamond Project ballets, "Red Angels," and "Mercurial Maneuvers." ♦ May 30 at 8: "Jeu de Cartes," "Chiaroscuro," excerpts from the Diamond Project ballets, "Red Angel," and "Mercurial Maneuvers." ♦ May 31 at 8: "Swan Lake," "Monumentum pro Gesualdo/Movements for Piano and Orchestra," and "Harmonielehre." ♦ June 1 at 2: "Kammermusik No. 2," "A Suite of Dances," "Twilight Courante," and "I'm Old Fashioned." ♦ June 1 at 8: "Harmonielehre," "Interplay," "Chiaroscuro," and "Cortège Hongrois." ♦ June 2 at 3: "Swan Lake," "Herman Schmerman Pas de Deux," "Kammermusik No. 2," and "Mercurial Maneuvers." ♦ June 4 at 7:30: "Divertimento No. 15," a new ballet by Melissa Barak, and "Harmonielehre." (New York State Theatre. 870-5570. Through June 30.)

AMERICAN BALLET THEATRE
May 29 at 2 and 8 and May 30 at 8: "The Dream" and "Symphony in C." ♦ May 31 and June 3-4 at 8 and June 1 at 2 and 8: "La Fille Mal Gardée." (Metropolitan Opera House. 362-6000. Through July 6.)

"STREB GO!: ACTION HEROES!"
At a recent show, the choreographer Elizabeth Streb, posing as a late-night television host, asked a performer, "So, what are you going to do for us tonight?" He said, "Fall flat on my face." And then he did, with perfect precision, his nose hitting the floor at exactly the same instant as his shoulders and hips. Streb's "pop-action" dancers bring to such daredevil deeds the minimalist clarity and exactitude of, say, Donald Judd. In her search for "a real move"—for the rest of the evening, for example, the nose-squashing falls began ten and twenty feet in the air—Streb has always steered clear of the sensationalist grotesqueries of her kin in the circus, the carnival, and the Wild West show. She still does, but lately, through slide projections of historic photographs, voice-over interludes, and subtle physical allusions, she has started introducing them as family. (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 242-0800. May 28-31 at 8, June 1 at 2 and 8, and June 2 at 2 and 7:30. Through June 16.)

NOCHE FLAMENCA
The flamenco group, founded by the husband-and-wife team of Martin Santangelo and Soledad Barrio, returns for its summer season. (New Victory, 209 W. 42nd St. 239-6200. May 31 at 7, June 1 at 2 and 7, and June 2 at noon and 5. Through June 16.)

"IT'S MORE WHAT I DON'T SAY . . ."
The choreographers Byron Suber and Jumay Chu, colleagues in the Cornell University dance program, collaborate on an evening-length work. (Danspace Project, St. Mark's In-the-Bouwerie, Second Ave. at 10th St. 674-8194. May 30-June 2 at 8:30.)

JOHANNES WIELAND
The former Maurice Béjart dancer presents an evening of recent choreographic works, including "Mnemonic," "Beneath," and "Retina." (Joyce SoHo, 155 Mercer St. 334-7479. May 30-June 2 at 8.)

"THE CHRIS & JUSTIN MEDICINE SHOW"
Last year, while they were still undergraduates at N.Y.U., Chris Yon and Justin Jones, who claim the Marx Brothers and *McSweeney's* as influences, decided to start a variety show that "got people to laugh a lot and not know what they were laughing at," says Jones. For their seventh installment, the

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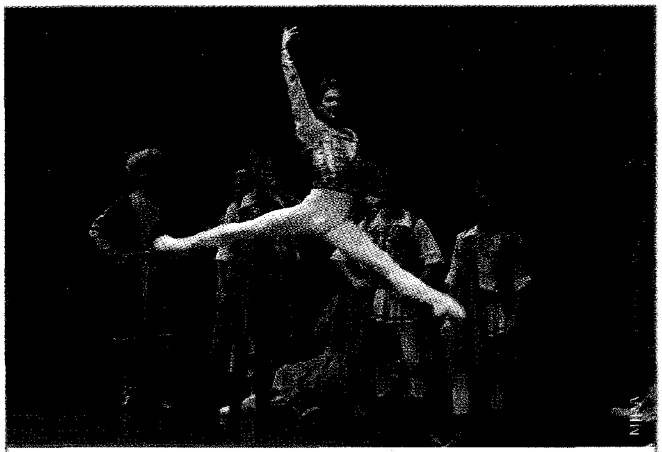
SPOTLIGHT ON culture

MIRA


MIRA

The Merry Widow

This comic romance based on Lehár's famous operetta is played out in Paris against a backdrop of diplomatic intrigue, popping champagne corks, and illicit love affairs. Danced by a rotating cast including Irina Dvorovenko (above). The Associated Press calls it, "a happy evening for ballet fans!" June 11th to 15th at 8 P.M.; June 12th and 15th at 2 P.M. **American Ballet Theatre, Metropolitan Opera House, 212-362-6000** or **www.abt.org**

Le Corsaire

Filled with pirates, slave girls, fearsome storms, and shipwrecks, this swashbuckling spectacular sets the stage for virtuoso dancing! Danced by a rotating cast including Ethan Stiefel (above). " 'Le Corsaire' is one adventure after another," says *The New York Times*. June 17th to 22nd at 8 P.M.; June 19th and 22nd at 2 P.M. **American Ballet Theatre, Metropolitan Opera House, 212-362-6000** or **www.abt.org**

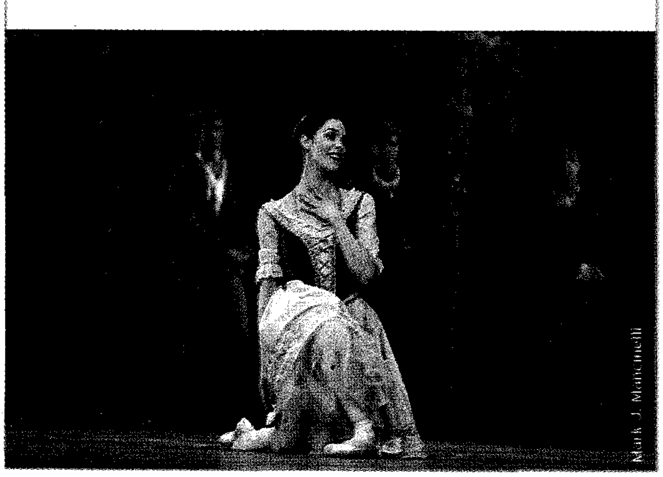
ABT
AT THE MET

Giselle

The worlds of the natural and supernatural collide in this timeless story of a philandering young nobleman who breaks a poor girl's heart. This tale shimmers with emotional power. Danced by a rotating cast including Susan Jaffe (below) in her farewell performance June 24th. *The New York Times* calls it, "richly attractive." June 24th to 29th at 8 P.M.; June 26th and 29th at 2 P.M. **American Ballet Theatre, Metropolitan Opera House, 212-362-6000** or **www.abt.org**

Swan Lake

Set to Tchaikovsky's beloved score, this classic tells of an enchanted princess and the well-meaning prince who is deceived into betraying her. Danced by a rotating cast including Angel Corella and Julie Kent (below). *The New York Times* hails it, "The blockbuster production of the dance season." July 1st to 6th at 8 P.M.; July 3rd and 6th at 2 P.M. **American Ballet Theatre, Metropolitan Opera House, 212-362-6000** or **www.abt.org**


Mark J. Marcinelli

Carol Pratt

American Ballet Theatre

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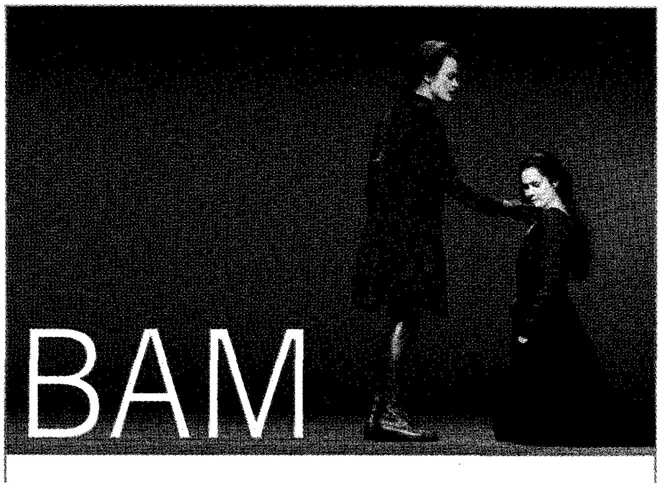
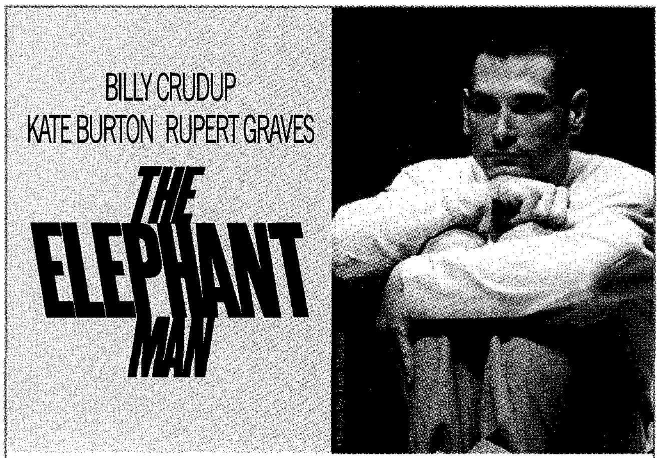


Bergman at BAM

Ingmar Bergman and The Royal Dramatic Theatre of Sweden return to BAM with Schiller's heartrending *Maria Stuart*. Lena Endre and Pernilla August portray Queen Elizabeth and Mary Queen of Scots as astonishingly complex women caught in the unwavering grip of history. Running June 12th to 16th only. **BAM Howard Gilman Opera House, 30 Lafayette Avenue, 718-636-4100** or **www.bam.org**

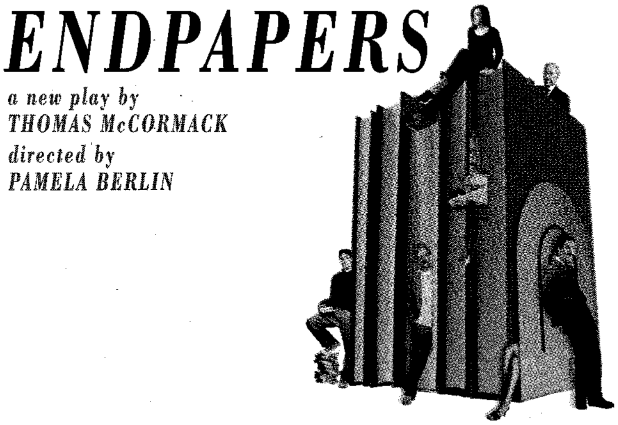


The Elephant Man

"Billy Crudup delivers a startling act of magic," declares *The New York Times*, in this fascinating revival of Bernard Pomerance's Tony Award®-winning play. Don't miss Tony® nominees Billy Crudup and Kate Burton in what Joan Hamburg calls "an extraordinary, mesmerizing evening!" **Royale Theatre, 242 West 45th Street, 212-239-6200** or **www.telecharge.com**

Endpapers

An insider's look at the world of publishing. The founder and CEO of a small, prestigious but financially unstable publishing house announces his retirement and begins the witty, provocative story about character and power—what it takes to be a CEO and what it takes away. Beware: the wrong man may bring the house down! **Variety Arts Theatre, 110 Third Avenue, 212-239-6200** or **www.telecharge.com**



Harlem Song

It's the next generation of entertainment in the world-famous Apollo Theatre. Directed by Tony Award®-winning George C. Wolfe, "Harlem Song" is a new musical that captures the extraordinary music and spirit of Harlem from the nineteen-twenties to the present through a thrilling song, dance, and multimedia experience. Performances begin July 6th. **Apollo Theatre, 253 West 125th Street, 212-307-7171** or **www.harlemsong.com**

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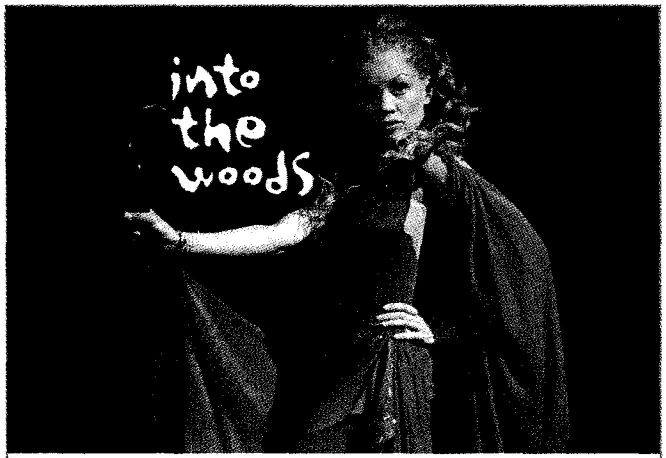
into the woods

Into The Woods

Vanessa Williams heads the cast of Stephen Sondheim and James Lapine's Tony Award®-winning fractured fairy-tale musical masterpiece. *The New York Times* says, "Follow the music. It will take you somewhere wonderful. By all means, go!" **Broadhurst Theatre, 235 West 45th Street, 212-239-6200** or **www.intothewoodsbroadway.com**

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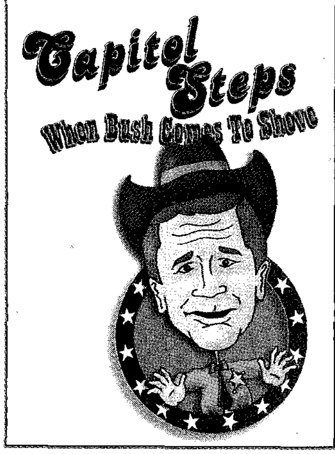
John Houseman Theatre

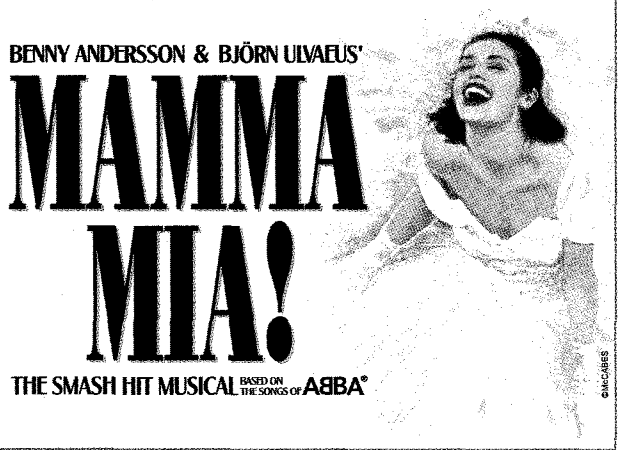
Now through August 31st, enjoy the musical political satire of the Capitol Steps in "When Bush Comes to Shove." From Mayor Bloomberg to Osama's Mama, no one is exempt from the skewer. "Little Ham," a Harlem jazz musical, begins September 10th. *The New York Times* called "Little Ham" "exquisite" and *The New Yorker* said it was "delightfully charming." **John Houseman Theatre, 450 West 42nd Street, 212-239-6200** or **www.telecharge.com**


Capitol Steps
When Bush Comes To Shove

Langston Hughes's
Little Ham

Mamma Mia!

Every night, audiences are dancing in the aisles at Broadway's musical sensation, "Mamma Mia!" With twenty-two of ABBA's greatest hits woven into one new musical, "'Mamma Mia!' brings happiness wherever it goes!" (*Time* magazine). "It is perhaps the single most ecstatic musical since 'A Chorus Line,'" raves *Entertainment Weekly*. **Winter Garden Theatre, Broadway at 50th Street, 212-563-5544** or **www.mamma-mia.com**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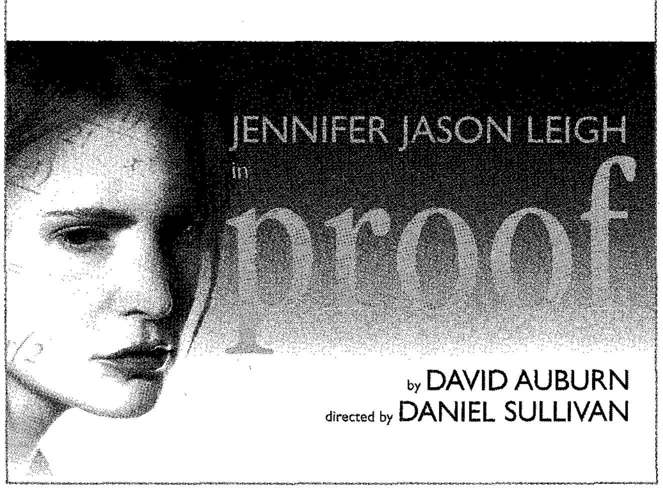
Noises Off

"A spectacularly funny festival of delirium," raves *The New York Times'* Ben Brantley about Broadway's biggest smash hit comedy. Patti LuPone and Peter Gallagher star in Michael Frayn's hilarious play. Joan Hamburg of WOR Radio cheers, "I laughed so hard I was embarrassed!" **Brooks Atkinson Theatre, 256 West 47th Street, 212-307-4100** or **www.ticketmaster.com**

Proof

Don't miss Jennifer Jason Leigh in "Proof"—Winner of the 2001 Tony Award® for Best Play and 2001 Pulitzer Prize for Drama. "Exhilarating—as accessible and compelling as a detective story," raves *The New York Times.* " 'Proof' is a joy! Run and get your tickets immediately!" says *New York* magazine. **Walter Kerr Theatre, 219 West 48th Street, 212-239-6200** or **www.proofonbroadway.com**


JENNIFER JASON LEIGH
in
proof
by DAVID AUBURN
directed by DANIEL SULLIVAN

Shoppers Carried by Escalators Into the Flames

From the author of "Jesus' Son," the art of the dysfunctional family is taken to new depths of humor and despair. Addiction, fundamentalism, and yes, torched shopping centers, are integral to American life as seen through Denis Johnson's disturbingly hilarious lens. Will Patton ("Remember the Titans") stars. **Dimson Theatre, 108 East 15th Street, 212-239-6200** or **www.telecharge.com**

SHOPPERS...
a new play by
the author of
JESUS' SON
DENIS
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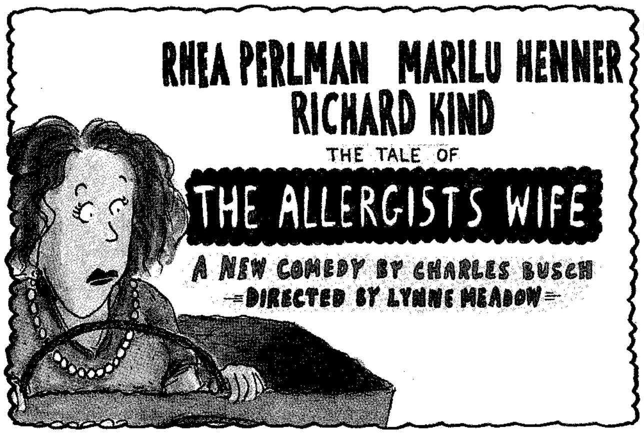
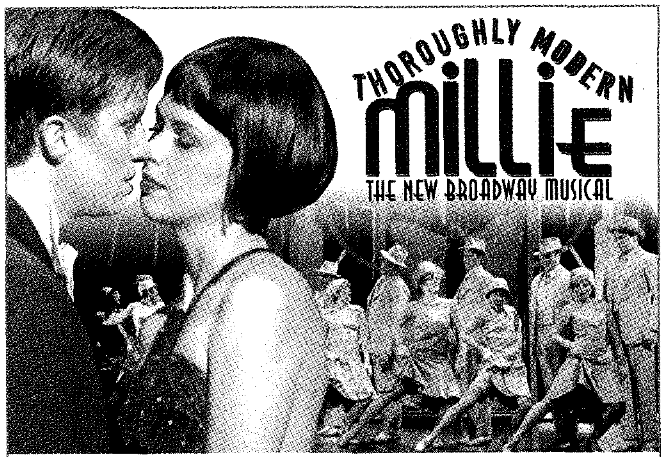

RHEA PERLMAN MARILU HENNER
RICHARD KIND
THE TALE OF
THE ALLERGIST'S WIFE
A NEW COMEDY BY CHARLES BUSCH
DIRECTED BY LYNNE MEADOW

The Tale of the Allergist's Wife

A fabulous new cast. A hilarious play. What's not to love? Rhea Perlman ("Cheers"), Marilu Henner ("Taxi"), and Richard Kind ("Spin City") have just joined the cast of Charles Busch's smash-hit comedy, directed by Lynne Meadow. "Wall-to-wall laughs," raves *The New York Times*. "Dazzlingly witty, brilliantly funny," says Liz Smith. **Ethel Barrymore Theater, 243 West 47th Street, 212-239-6200** or **www.allergistswife.com**

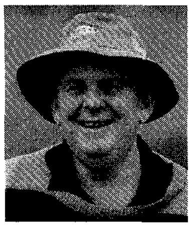

THOROUGHLY MODERN
MILLIE
THE NEW BROADWAY MUSICAL

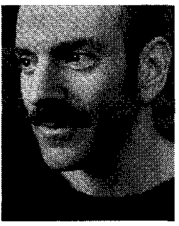
Thoroughly Modern Millie

Broadway's new musical smash-hit has been hailed by *USA Today* as "a thoroughly delightful experience." And *The Wall Street Journal* calls it "a lively, giddy, and just plain swell valentine to New York." **Marquis Theatre, Broadway at 46th Street, 212-307-4100** or **www.modernmillie.com**

Works and Process

On June 2nd and 3rd at 8 P.M., the acclaimed Australian poet Les Murray will read from his work. The Group for Contemporary Music will premiére five new musical settings for Murray's poems by Pulitzer Prize-winning composers Wayne Peterson and Charles Wuorinen, as well as Jo Kondo, Ricky Ian Gordon, and Jason Eckardt. **Guggenheim Museum, 5th Avenue at 89th Street, 212-423-3587** or **www.worksandprocess.com**


Les Murray


Ricky Ian Gordon

works & process

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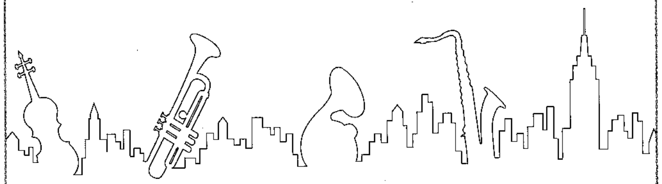

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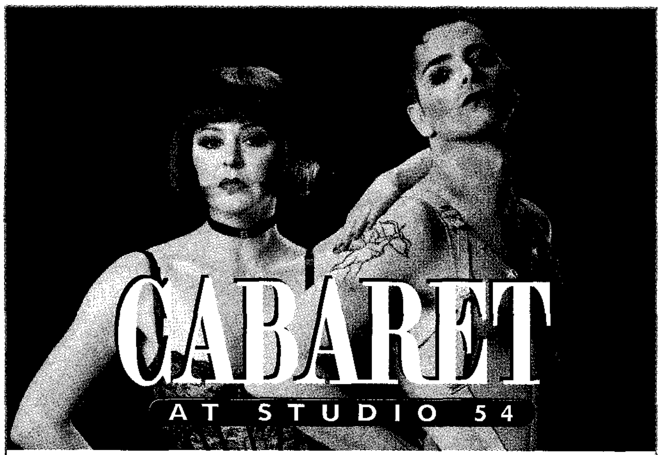
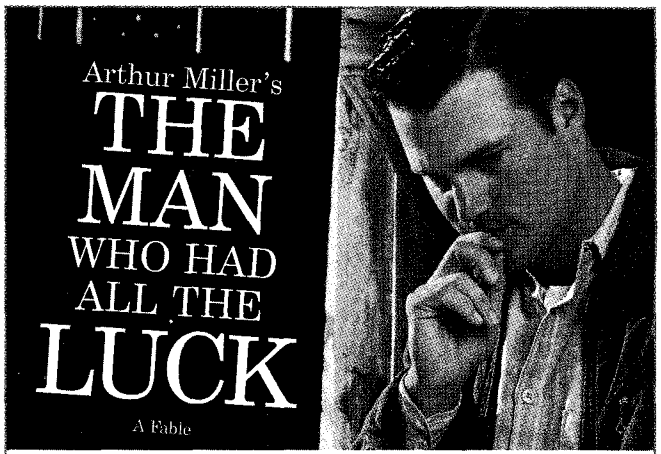
SPOTLIGHT ON culture



Cabaret

Roundabout's Tony Award®-winning reinvention of "Cabaret" has dazzled critics and audiences alike. "Sensational . . . absolutely mesmerizing." says *The New Yorker*. In its fifth glorious year, it is "still the best musical on Broadway!" exclaims the *New York Post*. Now starring Jane Leeves, John Stamos, Polly Bergen, and Hal Linden. **Studio 54, 254 West 54th Street, 212-239-6200** or **www.roundabouttheatre.org**


Arthur Miller's
THE MAN WHO HAD ALL THE LUCK
A Fable

The Man Who Had All The Luck

Before "The Crucible," "Death of a Salesman," and "All My Sons," there was "The Man Who Had All The Luck." Arthur Miller's first Broadway play returns in a dazzling new production, starring Chris O'Donnell and Samantha Mathis. Now playing. **American Airlines Theatre, 227 West 42nd Street, 212-719-1300** or **www.roundabouttheatre.org**

ROUNDABOUT
THEATRE COMPANY

All Over

From the Pulitzer Prize-winning writer of "Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?" and "Three Tall Women" comes a thrilling new production of an American classic. Edward Albee's "'All Over' is a lovely, poignant, deeply felt play," says *The New York Times*. Starring Rosemary Harris and Michael Learned. Performances begin June 7th. **Gramercy Theatre, 127 East 23rd Street, 212-307-4100** or **www.roundabouttheatre.org**

ALL OVER

The Boys From Syracuse

Based on Shakespeare's "The Comedy of Errors," this outrageously funny musical comedy tells the tale of two sets of twins and the women who can't tell them apart. Set in ancient Rome, "The Boys From Syracuse" features some of Rodgers and Hart's most lovely and unforgettable songs. Performances begin July 23rd. **American Airlines Theatre, 227 West 42nd Street, 212-719-1300** or **www.roundabouttheatre.org**

The Boys FROM Syracuse

Roundabout Theatre Company

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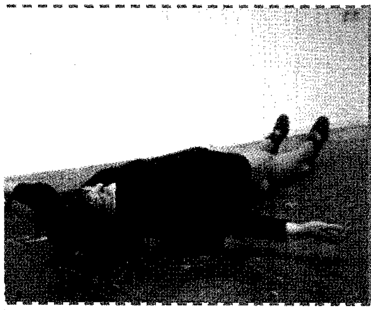
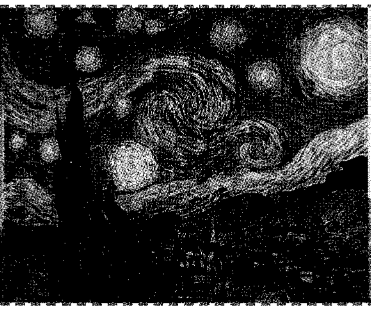


TEMPO

Erwin Wurm.
One Minute Sculpture.
1997. C-print.
Courtesy the artist and
Art : Concept, Paris

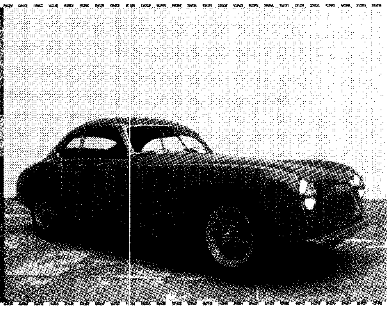
A WALK THROUGH ASTORIA

Rudy Burckhardt.
Untitled (detail), from the unique
album *An Afternoon in Astoria.*
1940. Gelatin silver print.
The Museum of Modern Art, New York.
Gift of CameraWorks, Inc., and purchase
© The Estate of Rudolph Burckhardt



TO BE LOOKED AT

Vincent van Gogh.
The Starry Night.
1889. Oil on canvas.
The Museum of Modern Art. Acquired
through the Lillie P. Bliss Bequest



AUTObodies

Pinin Farina.
Cisitalia 202 GT.
1946. Aluminum body.
The Museum of Modern Art, New York.
Gift of the manufacturer

MOMA QNS PHOTO BY ELIZABETH FELICELLA

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GRAND SLAM JUNE HIGHLIGHTS:

SATURDAY, JUNE 1
11 am–2 pm
Mr. Met will greet you at the entrance to the Museum!

SATURDAY, JUNE 8
***ID Day* • 1–4:30 pm**
Bring your baseball treasures and learn more about them from the experts.

SUNDAY, JUNE 16
Father's Day • 1–2:30 pm
Come meet artist LeRoy Neiman, who will autograph copies of his newly published illustrated edition of *Casey at the Bat.*

ON DECK!
Meet Mets legend Keith Hernandez and buy an autographed copy of his new Random House pop-up book: *First-Base Hero.* Details at www.amnh.org.

AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY

Central Park West at 79th Street www.amnh.org Open daily, 10 am–5:45 pm stage is still "the size of a large Oriental rug," and the point is still to cure us of boredom. With David Neuman, Jude Webre and the Snakeoil Sinfonia, Gus Solomons, Jr., and lots of others. (Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. 864-5400. May 29-30 at 9.)

NIGHT LIFE
CONCERTS

VISION FESTIVAL
Now in its seventh year, this festival valiantly presents a concentrated dose of left-of-mainstream jazz with roots in the free jazz of the sixties, the loft jazz of the seventies, and the downtown music scene of the eighties. Highlights of the four or five sets each evening include the following: William Parker's Little Huey Creative Music Orchestra on May 29 (CBGB's Lounge, 313 Bowery); a quintet with the legendary Wadada Leo Smith, and Joseph Jarman, on May 30; the Lisa Sokolov, Cameron Brown, and Gerry Hemingway trio on May 31; Sunny Murray Meets the Sonic Liberation Front on June 1; the Marty Ehrlich quartet and the David S. Ware quartet on June 2 (The Center, 268 Mulberry St., between Houston and Prince Sts.); and the Lewis Barnes Gathering on June 4 (CBGB's Lounge). (For more information, visit www.visionfestival.org. Through June 9.)

LIZA MINNELLI
The happy—as of press time—newlywed returns. The audience response to "New York, New York" should shake the West Side. (Beacon Theatre, Broadway at 74th St. 496-7070. May 31 at 8:15 and June 1, June 3, and June 4 at 8.)

WORLD MUSIC INSTITUTE
A night of Persian improvisation with the Iranian tar (a type of lute) master Hossein Alizadeh and the percussionist Madjid Khaladj. (Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. For more information, call 545-7536. June 1 at 8.)

GOSPELFEST 2002
Hezekiah Walker and the Love Fellowship Tabernacle Choir join Vickie Winans, Cissy Houston, Desiree Coleman, and others for an afternoon of soul-stirring music. (Hammerstein Ballroom, Manhattan Center, 311 W. 34th St. 307-7171. June 2 at 4.)

"ACOUSTIC EDGE"
A mini marathon featuring the former American Music Club front man **Mark Eitzel**, the lapsed jazz guitarist **Kelly Joe Phelps**, the singer-songwriter **Toshi Reagon**, and the folk-bluegrass-klezmer alchemists known as the **Wayfaring Strangers**. (For more on Eitzel see Maxwell's, and for more on Reagon see the Bowery Ballroom.) (Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. 864-5400. June 2 at 6.)

CLUBS

Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it's advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.

B. B. KING BLUES CLUB & GRILL
237 W. 42nd St. (997-4144)—June 4: The bluesy **Canned Heat** and the folky **Country Joe McDonald**, veterans of the Woodstock festival, typified the hippie sensibility of the sixties. Despite McDonald's having long since disbanded his original backing ensemble, the Fish, and despite Canned Heat's having lost a few of its original members, both acts will attempt to channel those halcyon days of peace, love, and conscientious objection.

BOTTOM LINE
15 W. 4th St., at Mercer St. (228-6300)—May 31-June 1: These boots are made for walkin'—**Nancy Sinatra** swings by with songs from her new album, "California Girl."

BOWERY BALLROOM
6 Delancey St. (533-2111)—May 29: The uncompromising singer **Toshi Reagon** celebrates the release of her latest album, "Toshi." May 30: Beloved of punk rockers, hirsute heavy metalheads, and unapologetic substance abusers alike, California's **Queens of the Stone Age**—a shifting cabal of psychedelic hard rockers revolving around the guitarist Josh Homme and the bassist Nick Oliveri—roll into town. With the former Nirvana drummer and Foo Fighters front man Dave Grohl onboard, this particular incarnation of the Queens promises maximum devastation. June 4: **DJ Shadow** is the turntablist Josh Davis, whose 1996 début, "Endtroducing . . .," was a notable product of the recent experimental and instrumental hip-hop movement. The album used turntables not to create a dance beat or as a background to rapping but to invent a mixture of interesting rhythms, sparse melodies, and disembodied vocal samples. Shadow is touring in support of a new, highly anticipated release, "The Private Press."

IRVING PLAZA
17 Irving Pl., at 15th St. (777-6800)—June 3: **DJ Shadow** (see the Bowery Ballroom). June 4: When the hip-hop production team of Pharrell Williams and Chad Hugo, otherwise known as the Neptunes, wasn't busy cranking out hits for Noreaga, Jay-Z, Britney Spears, Janet Jackson, and countless other stars, it was busy with the vocalist Shay putting together its own act, **N.E.R.D.** (which stands for "Nobody Ever Really Dies"). And busy is the word—N.E.R.D cut its début album twice. "In Search of . . ." was first recorded with the requisite drum machines and samples, and then, much more to their satisfaction, with live musicians on guitars, keyboards, and percussion. The result is a thrilling genre-hopping affair that should reach its apogee in concert.

TABLES FOR TWO

MAROONS
244 W. 16th St. (206-8640)—What's the right neighborhood for a comfy place serving a combination of Southern cooking (collards, fried green tomatoes, smothered pork chops) and Jamaican (callaloo, yucca puffs, curried goat)? Who knows? This one landed a step below street level midway down a quiet Chelsea block only because Arlene Weston, who often walked by on her way home, saw a shady-looking deli go out of business. "I don't know what they were selling out of there," she says. "But it wasn't deli meat."

Cue the Maroons video montage: Arlene's grandmother hands over her life savings to her granddaughter; the dark old Sixteenth Street property gets sunny French windows; an old classmate (Eugene McCall, Hackensack High, class of 1978) shows up, back from New Orleans to work as the chef; and family photos go up, including a big blowup right over the bar of grandmother Sarah Brooks-Weston wearing a serious expression and a long dress and standing on Fifth Avenue, just months after arriving from Jamaica, in 1946.

The food, too, is serious and authentic, and you'd better be seriously hungry if you're going to eat your share. Weston and McCall have made an effort to lighten up family recipes (they switched from lard to butter here and there), but they have not messed around where they shouldn't. The baby-back ribs come in a stack—sweet, hot, charred, and far from lean. The yucca puffs come in a cannonball arrangement on a pool of ginger and molasses: they taste like doughnuts that got a life. Even the mango-shrimp salad has an edge: the shrimps are spicy enough to make you reach repeatedly for your beer.

And that's just the appetizers. After that, it's so much curried goat (a thick stew with Spaldeen-size meat chunks) and fried chicken (with a bear paw of mac and cheese) that you have enough left over for the next day's lunch. Could this be healthy? The best person to ask would be Grandmother Brooks, who, at eighty-five, is a regular and likes to order the stewed oxtail. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays for lunch and dinner; Mondays for dinner only. Entrées $13-$24.)

—*Kevin Conley*

JOE'S PUB
425 Lafayette St. (539-8777)—May 30: The guitarist **Chris Whitley**. May 31: The Los Angeles ensemble **Brazzaville**, featuring veterans of Beck's and Tom Waits's bands, crafts sophisticated pop where languid bossa-nova-influenced rhythms and gritty lyrics conjure dark deeds on steamy dead-end streets. The band is celebrating the release of its third album, the enchanting "Rouge on Pockmarked Cheeks." June 1: **Me'Shell Ndegéocello**, a seventies-channelling dynamo whose songs are always in the key of life: she elegantly fuses R. & B., funk, and pop the way Stevie Wonder used to. June 2-4: The charming Portland outfit **Pink Martini.**

MAXWELL'S
1039 Washington St., Hoboken (201-653-1703)—May 29: The Texans in **American Analog Set** create some of the best atmospheric minimalist pop this side of the Rio Grande. June 1: **Mark Eitzel.** Though American Music Club broke up eight years ago, its meditative influence is still felt in the pop world. Since then, A.M.C.'s troubled lead singer and songwriter has had a mixed solo career. Typical is his new album of covers, "Music for Courage & Confidence." Though he takes on material from a wide range of composers (Bill Withers, Culture Club), the songs sound as if they were written by a single hand. The one standout is Eitzel's inspired rendition of Phil Ochs's "Rehearsals for Retirement."

NORTHSIX
66 N. 6th St., Williamsburg (718-599-5103)—May 31: **Sex Mob,** the ever-amusing downtown jazz-and-funk ensemble led by the slide trumpeter Steven Bernstein. June 4: The San Francisco quartet **Sleepytime Gorilla Museum** and the multilingual Brooklyn quartet **Barbez.**

WARSAW
261 Driggs Ave., Brooklyn (718-387-5252)—June 2: The **Black Rebel Motorcycle Club,** specializing in droning guitar rock. Swathed in black from head to toe and taking their name from Brando's brood of leather-clad bikers in "The Wild One," the B.R.M.C. make up for their lack of originality with a healthy rock-and-roll attitude.

JAZZ AND STANDARDS

ALGONQUIN HOTEL
59 W. 44th St. (840-6800)—Through June 29: The vocalist **Mary Cleere Haran,** who can capture a bygone era in song and anecdote with exceptional style, explores the more obscure works of Rodgers and Hart. Dining.

BLUE NOTE
131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (475-8592)—Through June 2: **Steps Ahead,** the popular not-quite-mainstream, not-quite-fusion outfit shares a bill with the saxophonist **Bill Evans** and his group the Soul Insiders.

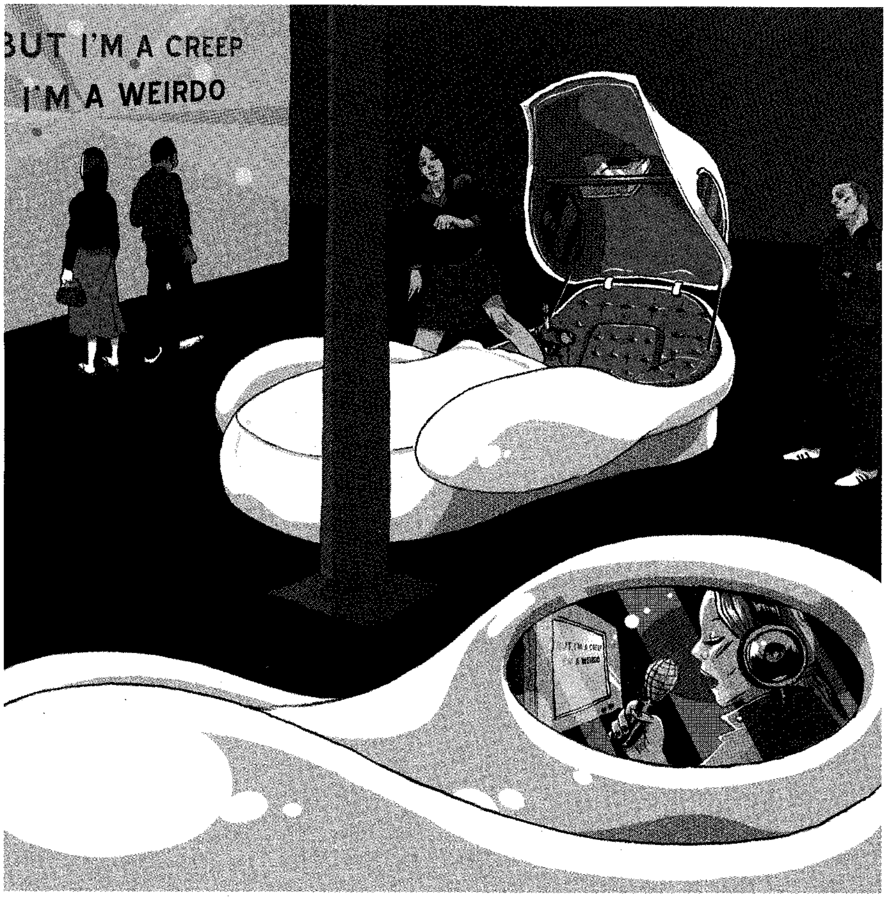
CARLYLE HOTEL
Madison Ave. at 76th St. (744-1600)—The Café Carlyle, a snug, windowless enclave in the doorman district, features discreet waiters, wraparound murals, and, through June 29, the magisterially puckish **Bobby Short.** If performing in the same room for more than thirty years is getting Short down, it doesn't show. Singing and playing piano as if his reputation were still on the line and conducting his mini big band with a glee bordering on giddiness, he remains the master of exuberant cabaret.

FEINSTEIN'S AT THE REGENCY
540 Park Ave., at 61st St. (339-4095)—Through June 22: The **John Pizzarelli** trio, with special guests **Bucky Pizzarelli** and **Jessica Molaskey.** The family that swings together stays together. Bucky, the dean of mainstream guitar, joins the trio led by John, Jr., a guitarist, singer, composer, and bandleader with a passion for the songs of the Tin Pan Alley and swing eras. John's brother Martin plays bass, alongside the pianist Ray Kennedy. Jessica Molaskey, John Jr.'s wife, adds her honeyed voice to the proceedings—her charming new CD, "Pentimento," proves that she's a winning addition to the musical clan.

IRIDIUM
1650 Broadway, at 51st St. (582-2121)—Through June 2: The **Sam Rivers/Jason Moran "Black Stars"**

Quartet. The last time the septuagenarian saxophonist Rivers met up with the twenty-something pianist Moran, they produced one of the most exciting works of 2001, "Black Stars." Now the album's original foursome (featuring the bassist **Tarus Mateen** and the drummer **Nasheet Waits**) have reunited. Expect great things—in Rivers, Moran and company have found a soul mate; in Moran's trio, Rivers connects with farsighted and energized players who can keep up with him. Mondays belong to the electric-guitar innovator **Les Paul.**

JAZZ STANDARD
116 E. 27th St. (576-2232)—Through June 2: The **Ray Bryant** trio. Most jazz pianists aren't born playing the blues, but Bryant convinces you that he was the exception. The rhythms and harmonies of the church are also never far from his fingers, which, combined with astute bebop logic, impart a satisfying richness to this undervalued veteran's virtuosity. June 4: The Cuban guitarist **Juan-Carlos Formell.** Dining.



Karaoke pods, in "Lee Bul: Live Forever," at the New Museum.

VILLAGE VANGUARD
178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (255-4037)—Through June 2: The **Tom Harrell** quintet. The trumpeter Harrell has established the kind of intimate responsiveness with the saxophonist **Jimmy Greene** that Harrell himself once had with Joe Lovano. Harrell also flaunts a distinctively dark-veined horn style and a compelling book of originals, as heard on his new release, "Live at the Village Vanguard." The **Vanguard Jazz Orchestra** holds sway on Mondays.

ART
MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

METROPOLITAN MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. (879-5500)—**"Adrian: American Glamour,"** at the Costume Institute. Through Aug. 18. ♦ The venerable husband-and-wife team of Claes Oldenburg and Coosje van Bruggen have installed four recent sculptures in the roof garden. The best is a twenty-three-foot-tall garden spade, its jaunty red blade lodged in the patch of grass that sprouts from its pedestal. It looks as if an Olympian landscaper just broke for lunch, and it's perfectly suited to the panoramic view of Central Park. Less satisfying is a baroque white form atop a black rectilinear base. Though based on a Man Ray photograph of Mies van der Rohe's pocket square, it looks more like a crumpled sheet of paper or a gawky rendition of a cloud. Through late fall. ♦ **"Tapestry in the Renaissance: Art and Magnificence."** The aptly titled show features forty-one sumptuous examples of magnificence woven between 1420 and 1560, including "The Unicorn Defends Itself," from the Met's own Cloisters, along with three panels from the ten-part "Acts of the Apostles," designed by Raphael for the Sistine Chapel, and all four sections of the "Alba Passion" cycle, shown together here for the first time since 1877. Through June 19. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:30, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 9.)

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART
11 W. 53rd St. (708-9480)—The midtown museum has closed, through 2005. The museum's temporary home in Long Island City opens on June 29.

GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (423-3500)—**"Brazil: Body and Soul."** Through May 29. (Open Sundays through Wednesdays, 9 to 6; Fridays and Saturdays, 9 to 8.)

WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART
Madison Ave. at 75th St. (570-3676)—Selections from the permanent collection are on display. (Open Tuesdays through Thursdays, and weekends, 11 to 6; Fridays, 1 to 9.)

NEW MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART
583 Broadway (219-1222)—**"Lee Bul: Live Forever."** Climb into one of Bul's three pods—think of a white fibreglass version of James Bond's Aston Martin—and you become the show. Projected onto the wall in front and on a screen inside of each creation are videos (teen-age girls running through the woods, a hyped-up Seoul streetscape, couples dancing) and lyrics to Western pop songs, karaoke-style. Slide into the leather-upholstered, wall-to-wall-carpeted, and unfortunately not air-conditioned pod, grab the microphone, and sing along to the Ramones' "I Wanna Be Sedated" or the Go-Gos' "Our Lips Are Sealed." Bul tweaks the idea of showmanship and its attendant embarrassments, but don't worry if you haven't had the cocktails that karaoke usually demands. The pods are soundproof, and no one in the gallery can hear you sing. Through July 7. (Open Wednesdays and Sundays, noon to 6; Thursdays through Saturdays, noon to 8.)

NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY
Fifth Ave. at 42nd St. (869-8089)—**"Victorians, Moderns, and Beats"** combines recent acquisitions—manuscripts, letters, and ephemera from Irish, British, and American writers—with the first public display of items from the Jack Kerouac archive. Two early versions of "On the Road" are on view, as is a pop-up valentine he made for his mother at age eleven. But these are outdone by his group of drawings detailing a fantasy baseball league that counted the Chryslers, the Pontiacs, and the Fords among its teams. For those who are lukewarm about Beats and baseball, there are original drafts by Dylan Thomas and Whitman, letters from Joyce, and volumes inscribed by Melville and E. B. White. Through July 27. (Open Mondays, and Thursdays through Saturdays, 10 to 6; Tuesdays and Wednesdays, 11 to 7:30.)

GALLERIES—UPTOWN

Unless otherwise noted, galleries are open Tuesdays through Saturdays, from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6.

JOHN JAMES AUDUBON / ROBERT HAVELL, JR.
Audubon spent ten years refining and publishing his "Birds of America" with the engraver Robert Havell, Jr., whose plate, prints, and proofs are on show here. A note on top of "Vigor's Warbler" reveals that its purple pansy struck the master as "too strong / to be kept lighter." It's refreshing to see Audubon as an aesthetic fusspot, after so many stuffed him in the creepy-dead-white-male camp. Through July 12. (Hirschl & Adler, 21 E. 70th St. 535-8810.)

PHYLLIS BRAMSON / "PROJECT ROOM"
Bramson's large canvases and works on paper compile reveries from found images and embroidery. The appealing works get greater heft in their context, beside the Project Room's cache of contemporary painting by women. In the company of a charmed Julie Heffernan portrait of a girl and her dog and Catherine Howe's incongruously Wyeth-style pinup "Pink with One Berry," Bramson seems part of a sort of ripsnortingly healthy neo-Gothic movement. The lone man represented, Timothy Hawkesworth, should be congratulating himself, like a high-school boy who's just been accepted at Vassar. Through June 8. (Littlejohn, 41 E. 57th St. 980-2323.)

KARIN DAVIE
Davie is known for prepossessingly swooshy stripe paintings (imagine a drunken collaboration between Bridget Riley and Sol Lewitt). There are several examples here, but mostly she seems intent on trying out fresh product lines on paper. The standout is a group of sculptural wall works made by sewing zippers into heavy sheets of paper, which have been painted on the reverse. The paper bulges, the zippers unzip, and we're offered little glimpses of reflected color, rondure, void, and wall. The effect, while it lasts, is as cleanly libidinous as a Madonna single. Through June 22. (Mary Boone, 745 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. 752-2929.)

RICHARD DIEBENKORN
For roughly a decade, before he returned to abstraction in the late sixties, the "Ocean Park" master made some of the clumsiest and loveliest life studies ever drawn or painted. Forty-four of them are on view here: brusque summaries of women reading or resting; gimlet-eyed faces; a few glances around the studio. With their cool, marbled color and seemingly casual draftsmanship, they're the opposite of "inimitable." Generations of art students have impersonated Diebenkorn's painterliness without getting very near the vexed elegance of

TOMER HANUKA

the originals. Through June 7. (Artemis Greenberg Van Doren, 730 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. 445-0444.)

ANNE HARRIS / CYNTHIA KNOTT

Harris's imaginary portraits have grown scarier and sultrier. With their watery, zonked eyes, glittering lips, and Flemish hairlines, her pale women seem both pathetic and faintly malevolent, as if they were caught midway in the transition between slacker and vampire. In contrast to their eerie allure, Knott's seascapes look a little decorous and stolid, especially at first glance: Turneresque air effects, set on a tabletop-flat horizon each time. The unvarying format puts the spotlight on nuance, but just when you think Knott is bluffing you find yourself struck by intimations of oceanic grandeur—old-fashioned feelings, maybe, but delivered with spare assurance. Through June 14. (DC Moore, 724 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. 247-2111.)

MARTIN PURYEAR

Four new large sculptures in wood and wire mesh confirm Puryear as the American master of eccentric formalism—a peer of the British dazzlers Richard Deacon and Tony Cragg. The works involve degrees of containment, ranging from a massive black shape that suggests either a stoppered jug or an evil pig to a huge open framework—a kneeling animal? a tank?—that houses a big, enigmatic mesh ampersand and a small, enigmatic wooden sphere. Dramatic form battles exquisite carpentry in pieces that are overwhelming from a distance and ravishing up close. Puryear's only fault at this point is that he doesn't show often enough. Through June 21. (McKee Gallery, 745 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. 688-5951.)

Short List

MAURIZIO CATTELAN
Marian Goodman, 24 W. 57th St. 977-7160. Through June 15.

RACHEL FEINSTEIN
Sotheby's, 72nd St. at York Ave. 606-7000. Through Sept. 1.

JIM PETERS
CDS, 76 E. 79th St. 772-9555. Through June 30.

ED RUSCHA
C&M Arts, 45 E. 78th St. 861-0020. Through June 8.

GALLERIES-CHELSEA

TOM BURCKHARDT

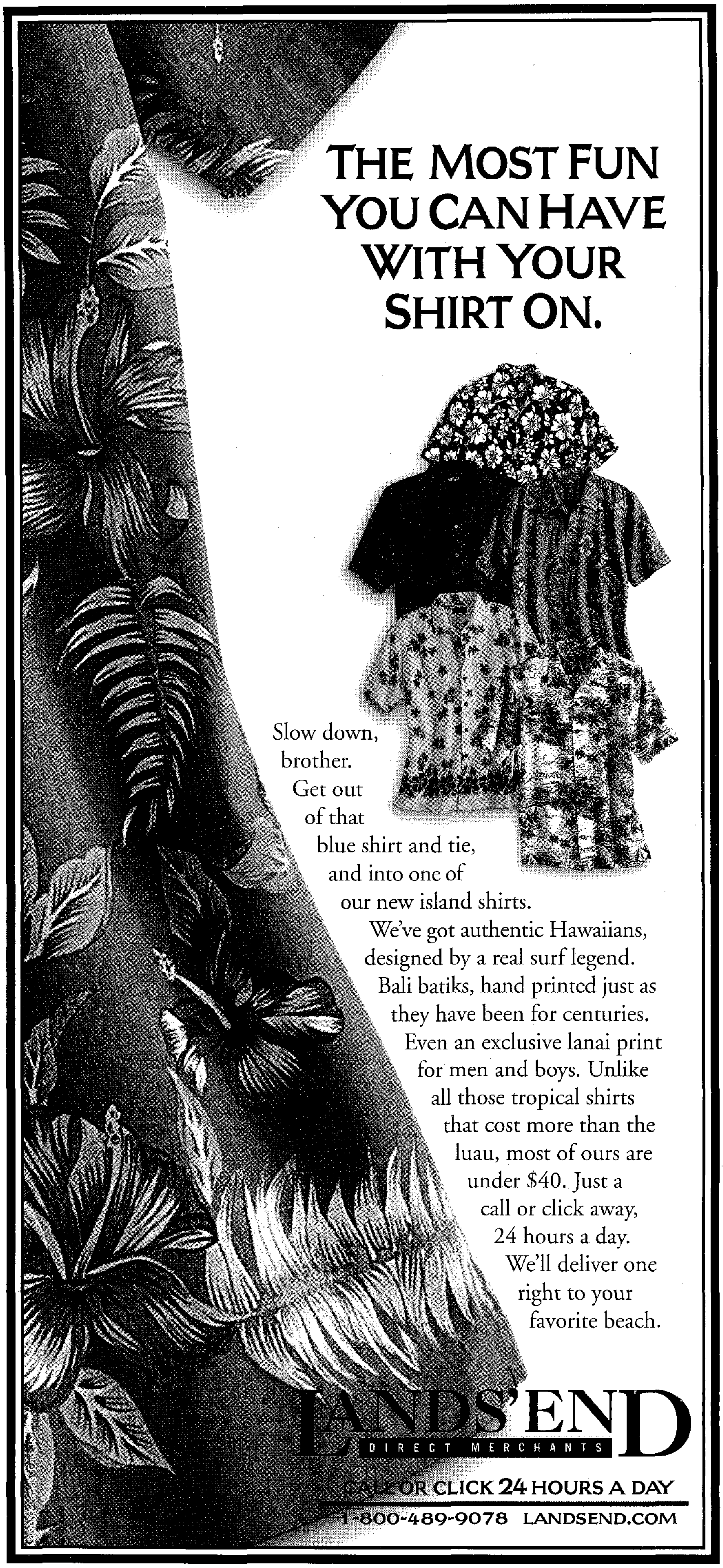
Burckhardt's upbeat Surrealism starts from a disappointed premise: that nothing means anything, that everything is possible, that painters had better amuse themselves. And Burckhardt does. You can't look at his pileups of plaid swatches, creeping biomorphs, and neatly rendered kitchen furniture without feeling (and sharing) their author's sly macaronic humor. In paintings with smooth enamel surfaces and titles like "Why Don't They Play Waltzes in Hip-Hop No More," Burckhardt surfs our becalmed Zeitgeist, and proves that pluralism is the ultimate form of artistic license. Through June 8. (Caren Golden, 526 W. 26th St. 727-8304.)

MARK DI SUVERO

There's something naggingly casual about "Chonk On," the septuagenarian sculptor's latest monumental construction. The basic form is a familiar Suveroian tepee of I-beams—but hung over one side, looking either daringly incongruous or simply clumsy depending on your taste, is a giant rectangular truss, salvaged from a New Jersey construction site. A lot of artists get bolder and sloppier in old age—that's fine if you're a watercolorist, but a little worrisome when your art work tips the scales at nine tons. Through June 28. (Paula Cooper, 534 W. 21st St. 255-1105.)

KATARZYNA KOZYRA

The Polish artist speaks in the lingua franca of sex and violence. In one room of her New York début, monitors and photographs show young men—naked except for a distinctly vaginal pink loincloth—lolling about self-consciously, à la Vanessa Beecroft. In the more compelling back room, a group of weapons buffs go about their weekend routine, armed with bazookas, machine guns, flamethrowers and explosives. The violence creates occasionally lovely



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AND: A calendar of *New Yorker* events across the country

images: at one point a shack detonates and a sort of Joel Shapiro sculpture of floating planks preens for a moment in midair. Through June 1. (Postmasters, 459 W. 19th St. 727-3323.)

Short List

A. BALASUBRAMANIAM
Talwar, 108 E. 16th St. 673-3096.
Through June 18.
BRICE MARDEN
Marks, 522 W. 22nd St. and 523 W. 24th St.
243-0200. Through June 21.
SUSAN ROTHENBERG
Sperone Westwater, 415 W. 13th St. 431-4685.
Through June 1.

GALLERIES-DOWNTOWN

"ARTISTS TO ARTISTS"
Just over a decade ago, the Marie Walsh Sharpe Art Foundation began granting free studios to a group of fourteen or so artists per year. People like Chuck Close and Philip Pearlstein did the selecting, and the result—judging by this huge, eclectic, mostly marvellous show—is that the program has become a magnet for artists just on the point of "emergence": painters like Drew Beattie, Brad Kahlhammer, and Denyse Thomasos, sculptors like Jimbo Blachly, Sally Tittmann, and Stephan Hendee, and more than a hundred others. Like the current National Academy Invitational, this show offers what the Whitney Biennial used to: a chance to look at a cross-section of new art, and to come away buoyed. Through June 1. (Ace, 275 Hudson St. 255-5599.)

"PUBLIC KEY"
This small group show likens cryptography to art but does no favors to art. Martin Tupper presents a steel wall of press releases for other galleries as if they were written in code (an old joke but a true one). The most damning document is a framed letter from the artists' collective Cercle Ramo Nash to the Navajo Code Talkers Association, asking those aging veterans to translate and recite a short statement about "the language of artists" on a day's notice, in time for their show's opening. The plea (which includes the observation that Western art "uses other cultures like material for a simple game") remains eloquently unanswered. Through June 15. (Apex, 291 Church St. 431-5270.)

Short List

ELLSWORTH KELLY
Drawing Center, 35 Wooster St. 219-2166.
Through July 24.
JASON RHOADES
Zwirner, 43 Greene St. 966-9074.
Through June 29.
GRETCHEN DOW SIMPSON
Axelle, 148 Spring St. 226-2262. Through June 17.

PHOTOGRAPHY

TINA BARNEY
This time out Barney offers an inside look at the English upper crust. The mixture of pride and cynicism in each picture is documented by Barney's exceptional use of color and large-format photography. You can move in close to these big prints just the way you might examine the brushwork of a Velázquez. Barney captures details—a half-unzipped fly or an unsightly appliance cable—that neatly skew the practiced equipoise of her subjects. Through June 14. (Borden, 560 Broadway. 431-0166.)

SCOTT PETERMAN
Peterman photographs ice-fishing shacks—bob-houses they're called—with a four-by-five camera from a respectful distance. In the process he monumentalizes the way-up-north temporary, vernacular architecture. The pictures are gorgeous: each plastic, plywood, or aluminum-shelled shack stands centered in the frame, many without a visible horizon line (one memorable shack set on a lake appears to be about to surrender to spring). Peterman's pictures achieve an abstract, formal quality that brings to mind the Kaaba, in Mecca, without the pilgrims. In fact, no people appear in the shots at all, just the traces of the fishermen's individuality (paint jobs, fancy roofs) along with a stray can of Budweiser. Through June 15. (Daniel Silverstein, 520 W. 21st St. 929-4300.)

PAOLO ROVERSI
The fashion photographer uses vintage cameras and prints with purposefully antique techniques, borrowing freely from turn-of-the-century greats Eugène Atget and Gustave Le Gray. While it's briefly fascinating to see what appears to be a daguerreotype of a naked Naomi Campbell or a vintage albumen print of Shalom Harlow, the pictures don't add up to more than artsified fashion spreads. But the shots of Roversi's own Paris studios filled with camera equipment and backdrops offer a less derivative, poetic look into the photographer's interior life which the model portraits cannot. Through June 22. (Pace/MacGill, 32 E. 57th St. 759-7999.)

LARRY SILVER
Teasing black-and-white pictures of suburban ennui taken by this Photo League veteran after he moved to Westport, Connecticut, in 1973. Silver, who first came to fame in the fifties with his photographs of Muscle Beach in California, concentrates here on more prosaic, less inflated subjects—swing sets, boarded-up beach houses, baseball games, and campgrounds. This work is much quieter than Silver's early stuff; now when people are present, they're almost always alone in either a cramped or an endless landscape. But you leave feeling pretty sure that contemporary hot-shot scenarist Gregory Crewdson has learned a few tricks from this Connecticut chronicler. Through July 27. (Bruce Silverstein, 504 W. 22nd St. 627-3930.)

THOMAS STRUTH
A rare and instructive disappointment by the preëminent photographer of our time. Though grand and lovely, Struth's large color pictures of people in Berlin's Pergamon Museum of Ancient Near Eastern Art and Architecture are deadened by his decision to employ a crowd of invited extras. There proves to be a fatal difference between people behaving naturally and people behaving naturally for a camera—at least when the setting is less than sublime. Struth's only previous use of ringers, for an overwhelming interior of the Pantheon in Rome in 1990, produced a masterpiece. This show's misstep illuminates just how complex and lofty the standards are that Struth has led us to take for granted. Through June 15. (Marian Goodman, 24 W. 57th St. 977-7160.)

"PARIS AS GAMEBOARD: MAN RAY'S ATGETS"
In 1926, the Surrealist Man Ray bought more than forty photographs from the turn-of-the-century photographer-for-hire Eugène Atget, and assembled them into an album. Atget's Paris scenes—a body of work comprised of now-vanished architectural details, deserted circus grounds, and wonderfully spooky shop windows on the Avenue des Gobelins—prefigure the movement that Man Ray and Duchamp would soon come to champion. This show is worth seeing if only for the chance to see prints done by Atget himself. Through June 15. (Wallach Art Gallery, Columbia University, 116th St. at Broadway. 854-7288. Closed Tuesdays.)

INTERNATIONAL CENTER OF PHOTOGRAPHY
1133 Sixth Ave., at 43rd St. 857-0000—**"Dream Street: W. Eugene Smith's Pittsburgh Photographs."** ♦ **"Rise of the Picture Press: Photographic Reportage in Illustrated Magazines, 1918-1939."** Both shows through June 16. (Open Tuesdays through Thursdays, 10-5; Fridays, 10-8; Saturdays and Sundays, 10-6.)

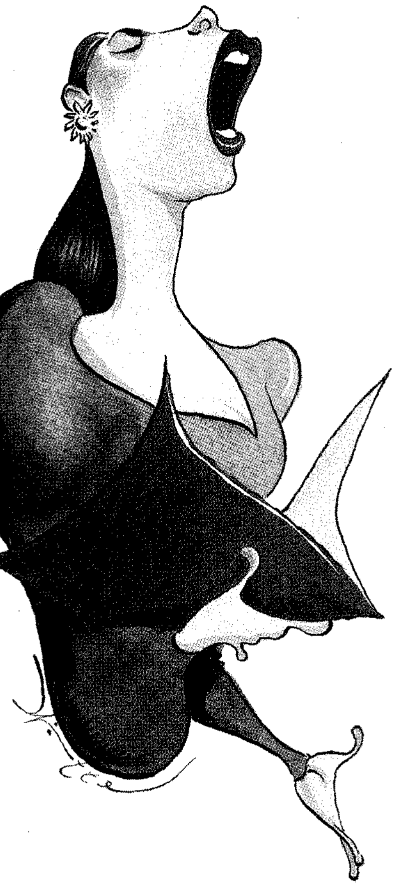
Short List

GREGORY CREWDSON
Luhring Augustine, 531 W. 24th St. 206-9100.
Through June 15.
DAVID LEVINTHAL
Morris, 465 W. 23rd St. 727-2752. Through June 15.
SHOJI UEDA
292 Gallery, 120 Wooster St. 431-0292.
Through June 15.

AUCTIONS AND ANTIQUES

SOTHEBY'S

May 29 at 7: Twenty-five years ago, Sotheby's held the first international auction of Mexican art works ever mounted in New York. To commemorate the occasion, the house is devoting the opening of the first session of a sale of Latin-American art to thirteen lots of major works by such noted Mexican artists as Leonora Carrington and Rufino Tamayo ("Fuego," estimated to bring up to a million dollars). The rest of the session includes paintings and sculpture by María Martins, Fernando Botero, and many others. ♦ May 30 at 10:15 A.M: The sale concludes with a selection of works by such artists as Matta and Wifredo Lam. (York Ave. at 72nd St. 606-7000.)



STAYING POWER *Ever since the death of the beloved Jan DeGaetani in 1989, American music has been waiting for a singer who can address both contemporary and classic scores with beauty, presence, and insight—all easily achieved by the young, velvet-toned Mary Nessinger, whose exacting musicianship and quiet dignity have made her a fixture of the New York scene. She sings at the Guggenheim Museum on June 2-3.*

MICHAEL WITTE

CHRISTIE'S

May 29 at 2: American furniture, silver, prints, and folk art. An 1812 Federal mahogany armchair, one of twenty-four commissioned from Charles Honoré Lannuier for New York's City Hall, is a highlight of the sale. ♦ May 30 at 10 A.M.: Sporting art, including paintings by Munnings, Herring, and Blinks. ♦ May 30 at 2: A sale of violins, violas, cellos, and classical and modern guitars, along with bows from the estate of a private collector. ♦ May 31 at 10 A.M. and 2: Fine wine. (20 Rockefeller Plaza, at 49th St. 636-2000.)

PHILLIPS

June 4 at 2: English and Continental furniture from the collection of John Hobbs. (3 W. 57th St. 940-1200.)

TARISIO

In preparation for an Internet sale, the house will hold an exhibition of fine violins, violas, cellos, and bows at CAMI Hall. (165 W. 57th St. 307-7224. May 28-30.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC
OPERA

AMATO OPERA

The little-opera-company-that-could presents its final performances of **"Carmen,"** conducted by Anthony Amato. (Amato Opera Theatre, 319 Bowery, at 2nd St. 228-8200. May 31 at 7:30, an end-of-season gala performance on June 1 at 7, and June 2 at 2:30.)

AMERICAN OPERA PROJECTS: "THE LOST CHILDHOOD"

Excerpts from Janice Hamer's opera in progress, with a libretto by Mary Azrael (based on Yehuda Nir's memoir of the Holocaust), were first heard in the New York City Opera's "Showcasing American Composers" series last season. Now A.O.P. presents a complete concert version with piano of Act I, conducted by Steven Osgood. (The eventual full production is to be directed by Gottfried Wagner, who has been a passionate advocate of Holocaust studies.) The singers include Lori Phillips and Chris Pedro Trakas. (Lighthouse International, 111 E. 59th St. May 30-31 at 8. For information about tickets, call 718-398-4024.)

ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC: "THANK YOU, KURT MASUR"

The journey nears its end. Kurt Masur's final concert as the orchestra's music director—part of the Lincoln Center Festival, in July—is still to come, but this week brings his final subscription programs. First, two concerts of music by Bartók and Joseph Turrin ("Hemispheres," a world première), along with Beethoven's Violin Concerto (with Anne-Sophie Mutter). (Avery Fisher Hall. 721-6500. May 30-31 at 8.) ♦ For closing night, an all-Beethoven program: the Violin Concerto, and the Symphony No. 3, "Eroica." (June 1 at 8.)

NEW AMSTERDAM SINGERS

Clara Longstreth conducts the chorus in their final concert of the season. In addition to the world première of Paul Alan Levi's "Acts of Love" (a meditation on Noah and the Flood, having your car washed, stuffing onions, and more intimate pursuits), they perform Menotti's classic fable "The Unicorn, the Gorgon, and the Manticore," along with some of the comic Renaissance madrigals (by Lassus, among others) that inspired it. (Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St. 501-3330. May 30 at 8.)

ORPHEUS CHAMBER ORCHESTRA: "JEWISH COMPOSERS IN HOLLYWOOD"

The conductorless virtuosos of Orpheus perform music by Waxman, Tansman, Korngold, Weill (the Violin Concerto, with Naoko Tanaka), and Schoenberg (the Chamber Symphony No. 2). (92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 415-5500. June 1 at 8.)

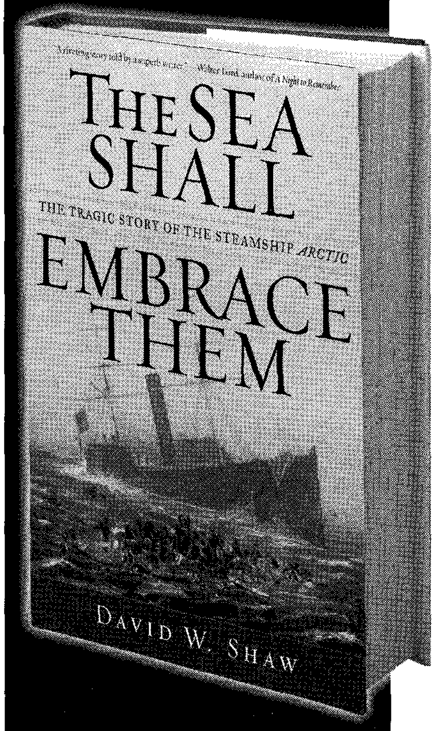
STONEWALL CHORALE

Stonewall, the nation's first gay-and-lesbian chorus, sings an all-American program of Bernstein, Copland, Sondheim, Corigliano (his setting of Dylan Thomas's "Fern Hill"), and others, in their final concert of the season. (Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St. 501-3330. June 4 at 8.)

RECITALS

BARGEMUSIC

Two programs coördinated by the violist Paul Neubauer, in which miniatures by American, Eastern European, and Japanese composers prepare the way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DAVID W. SHAW

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for big hunks of mainstream German repertory. The assisting musicians include the violinist Ani Kavafian and the pianist André-Michel Schub. May 30-31 at 7:30: Piano pieces by Bernstein ("Touches," an elusive but satisfying late work) and Schuman and two Copland works for piano and violin, along with music by Mozart and Brahms (the Piano Quartet in C Minor). ♦ June 1 at 7:30 and June 2 at 4: Works by Pärt, Khachaturian, and Takemitsu ("A Bird Came Down the Walk," for viola and piano), followed by Schubert's "Arpeggione" Sonata and Beethoven's Piano Trio in B-Flat Major, the "Archduke." (Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. 718-624-2083.)

THE QUEEN'S CHAMBER BAND

While this early-music ensemble (guided by its harpsichordist, Elaine Comparone) spends most of its concerts performing the repertory for which its period instruments were designed, it wraps up the season with its sixth annual "New Music for the Band" concert, a program featuring works by Young Turks like Kenji Bunch and Jon Catler ("Shadow," a microtonal piece with electric guitar) along with pieces by two veterans of the Neo-Romantic wing, Joseph Fennimore and William Mayer. (Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St. 501-3330. May 29 at 8.)

FRIENDS & ENEMIES OF NEW MUSIC

A typically quirky concert mix from the longstanding contemporary-music collaborative, including Leo Ornstein's "Impressions of Notre Dame" (an early-twentieth-century Futurist shocker), Ben Yarmolinsky's "Schubert Songs" (based on poems of the forgotten Depression-era bard David Schubert), and a Shakespeare sonnet set by Tom Cipullo. The musicians include the tenor Scott Murphree and the pianists Jeanne Golan and Christopher Oldfather. (Elebash Auditorium, CUNY Graduate Center, 365 Fifth Ave. May 30 at 8. No tickets required.)

AMERICAN FESTIVAL OF MICROTONAL MUSIC: "MICROFEST 2002"

The festival, celebrating its twenty-first year, offers two final concerts at Washington Square United Methodist Church, coördinated by Johnny Reinhard. May 31 at 8: A concert of improvisations by such soloists as the trumpeter Lew Soloff and the cellist Dave Eggar, backed up by a formidable rhythm section of drums, percussion, and bass. ♦ June 1 at 8: Gems, rarities, and odds and ends, including the original quarter-tone versions of two Webern lieder (featuring the tenor Philip Anderson) and an appearance by the instrument maker Ben Hume, who performs on a replica of a Sumerian aulos. (135 W. 4th St. Tickets at the door.)

"COMPOSERS CLOSE UP": JOHN ZORN

The final concert of Merkin Concert Hall's "Zoom" series is devoted to a single work by the downtown avant-jazz iconoclast, "Chimeras," featuring the sopranos Beth Anne Hatton and Ilana Davidson and the cellist Fred Sherry. WYNC's John Schaefer hosts. (129 W. 67th St. 501-3330. June 1 at 9.)

SUNDAYS ON THE ISLAND

Brahms's Piano Quartet in C Minor anchors a program of chamber works, featuring the pianist Inessa Zaretsky, held at a charming City Island bed-and-breakfast. (Le Refuge Inn, 620 City Island Ave., the Bronx. 212-927-9194. June 2 at 12:30.)

GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM "WORKS & PROCESS" SERIES

It's not surprising that the work of Les Murray, Australia's leading poet, has not been widely set by English-speaking composers; perhaps its formidable surface—gnarled, muscular, and image-rich—has scared a number of them away. The Guggenheim has attempted to close the gap by commissioning a collection of songs from such composers as Charles Wuorinen, Ricky Ian Gordon, and Jo Kondo; the featured players—from the ranks of the Group for Contemporary Music—include the mezzo-soprano Mary Nessinger, the pianist Marilyn Nonken, and the percussionist Tom Kolor. The poet will be on hand to read and discuss his work. (Fifth Ave. at 89th St. 423-3587. June 2-3 at 8.)

ELYSIUM

Peter Tiboris's MidAmerica Productions concern has long been notable (or notorious) for trucking an endless parade of American youth orchestras, bands, and choruses into the city to fill the gaps in Carnegie Hall's schedule. But they also nurture fine professional chamber concerts, including this one by MidAmerica's resident ensemble (including two members of the New York Philharmonic, the cellist Qiang Tu and the hornist L. William Kuyper), which, in its last concert of the season, performs music by Mozart (the Quintet for Horn and Strings, K. 407), Berkeley, and Brahms (the Piano Quintet) at Weill Recital Hall. (Carnegie Hall. 247-7800. June 2 at 8:30.)

WERNER GÜRA

Schubert's "Die Schöne Müllerin" has become the signature work of this young German lyric tenor, whose fresh, refined, and unpretentious reading (heard on a recent Harmonia Mundi recording) gives the piece a watercolor tenderness remote from the heavier emotions indulged by other singers. The pianist Jan Schultsz accompanies him. (Walter Reade Theatre, Lincoln Center, 165 W. 65th St. 721-6500. June 3 at 7:30.)

CHINATOWN HEALTH CLINIC FOUNDATION: "CHILDREN'S CORNER SUITE"

A benefit concert for the downtown children's health clinic—featuring music by Brahms, Fauré, and Richard Rodgers—includes performances by such artists as the pianists Emanuel Ax and Helen Huang and the soprano Sylvia McNair. (Alice Tully Hall. 875-5050. June 4 at 7:30.)

OUT OF TOWN

HUDSON VALLEY CHAMBER MUSIC CIRCLE

The first chamber-music concert of the summer season takes place amidst the pastoral ambience of the Bard College campus, where the Kalichstein-Laredo-Robinson Trio collaborates with the violinist Cho-Liang Lin for an evening of Haydn, Schumann, Prokofiev (the scintillating Sonata for Two Violins), and Brahms (the Piano Quartet in G Minor). (Olin Hall, Annandale-on-Hudson, N.Y. June 1 at 8. For information about tickets, call 845-340-0044.)

ABOVE AND BEYOND

READINGS

May 29 at 6:30: The actors B. D. Wong and Peter Gerety and the dancer Carmen de Lavallade read short stories by Rick Moody, Dorothy West, and Claire Davis that appeared in the anthology "The Best American Short Stories 2001." (Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. 864-5400.) ♦ May 29 at 7:30: James Gavin offers passages from his biography of the jazz-trumpet great Chet Baker, "Deep in a Dream." (Barnes & Noble, Sixth Ave. at 21st St. No tickets necessary.) ♦ May 30 at 6: William Kornblum, a sociology professor at the City University of New York Graduate Center, reads from "At Sea in the City," his account of sailing around New York Harbor in a twenty-four-foot 1910 Crosby catboat. (South Street Seaport Museum, 207 Front St. No tickets necessary.) ♦ May 30 at 7:30: The writer Jonathan Lethem introduces the poet Kenneth Koch. (Bowery Poetry Club, 308 Bowery. For more information, call 254-9628.)

TALKS

May 30 at 7: The translators Rachel Hadas, Eliot Weinberger, and Rosanna Warren talk about their work. (Poets House, 72 Spring St., second floor. For more information, call 431-7920.) ♦ June 1 at 7: Arun Gandhi, the grandson of Mahatma and the director of the M. K. Gandhi Institute for Nonviolence, discusses terrorism and nonviolence. He'll be joined by the photographer and author Barry Shainbaum, whose latest book is "Hope and Heroes: Portraits of Integrity." (The New York Open Center, 83 Spring St. 219-2527.)

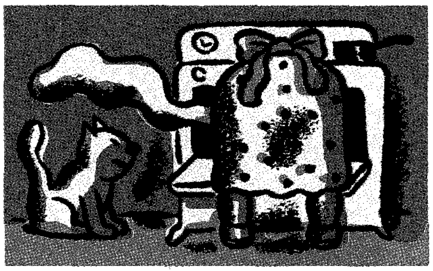
TOUR

June 2 at 11 A.M.: Joe Svehlak and Louis Blumengarten, of the Brooklyn Center for the Urban Environment, lead a stroll through Bushwick. For more information, call 718-788-8500.

BOOK CURRENTS

Fresh from the Oven

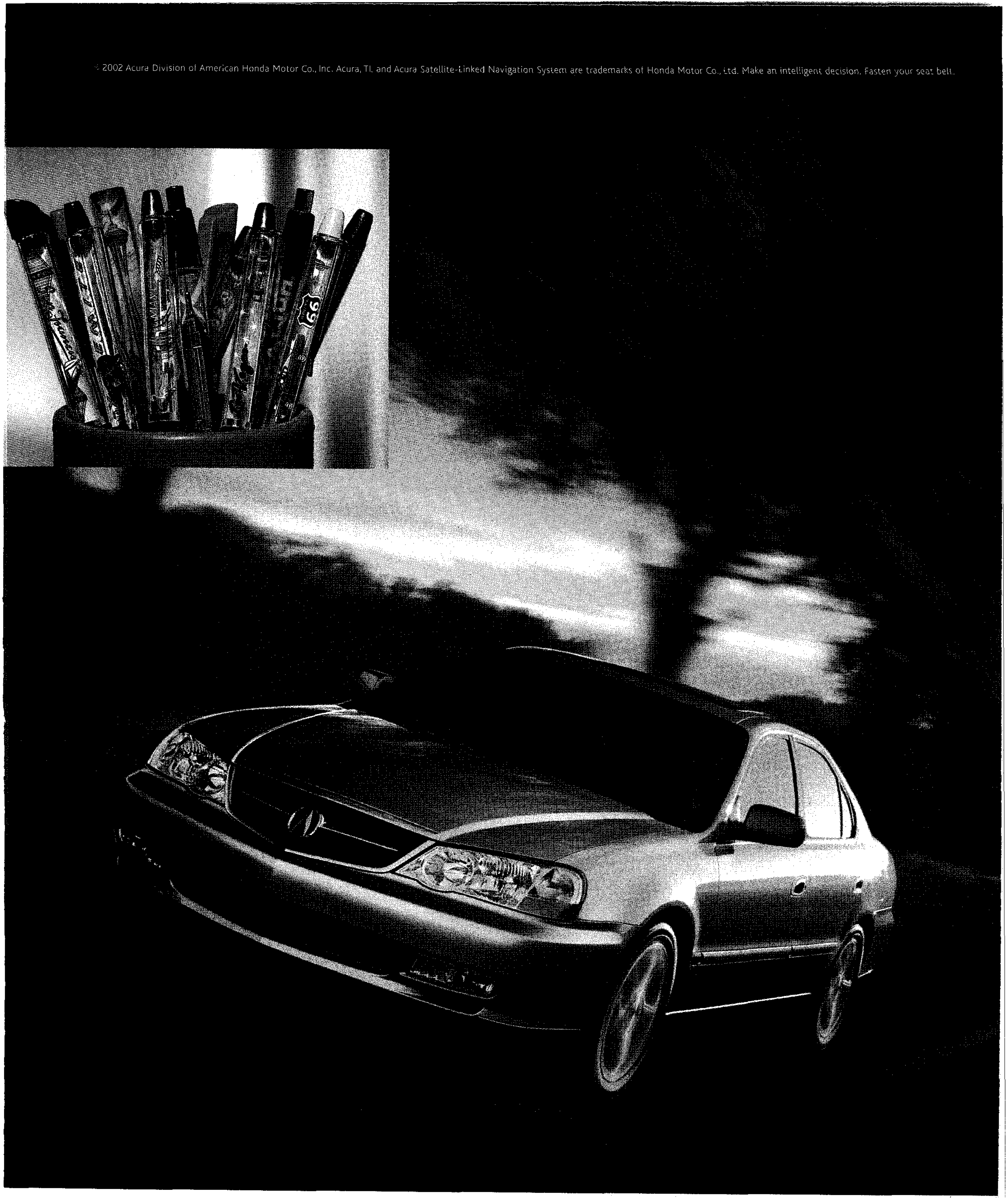
"You mean you just go up to complete strangers and talk to them about pie?" a friend's father asks Pascale Le Draoulec, the restaurant critic for the New York *Daily News*. Strangers not only talked to Le Draoulec, but they gave her enough material for a book. In **AMERICAN PIE** (HarperCollins), she visits antique stores, fish boils, and churches and discovers a staunch pie culture. Le Draoulec samples shoofly pie in Pennsylvania Dutch country and the elusive bumbleberry in Zion Canyon, and finds that even the most timid pie-makers guard their recipes aggressively. "Pie is the food of the heroic," a journalist in the *Times* wrote in 1902, after an Englishman suggested that Americans skip their daily slice. "No pie-eating people can ever be vanquished."



MARC ROSENTHAL

U.S. Army and Navy nurses at the Santo Tomás civilian prison camp in the Philippines during the Second World War would have agreed; after months of near-starvation, they were freed by American G.I.s armed with rations of "liberation" cherry pies. The story, and the recipe, are found in Barbara Haber's history of American cooks, **FROM HARDTACK TO HOME FRIES** (Free Press), culled from cookbooks in Radcliffe's Schlesinger Library. Haber reminds us that familiar food and shared recipes made the kitchen range home for displaced émigrés, bringing Aunt Sylvia's soul food to Harlem, Sacher Torte to Harvard Square, and ice cream and oranges to dusty railroad depots along the Santa Fe trail. The collections of these recipes became a species of batter-spattered belles-lettres. In 1923, Joseph Conrad, in an introduction to his wife's cookbook, praised such literary undertakings as "above suspicion," for their object "can conceivably be no other than to increase the happiness of mankind."

—Lauren Porcaro



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MOVIES OPENING

ELLING
A Norwegian comedy about two former psychiatric patients who move into an Oslo apartment together, directed by Petter Naess. Opening May 29. (Angelika Film Center.)

THE NEXT BIG THING
The work of an unsuccessful New York artist (Chris Eigeman) starts selling when it's attributed to a fictitious identity, in a satire written and directed by P. J. Posner. Opening May 29. (Angelika Film Center and Sutton 1 and 2.)

NIJINSKY: THE DIARIES OF VASLAV NIJINSKY
A documentary about the dancer and choreographer, directed by Paul Cox. With Derek Jacobi. Opening May 29. (Film Forum.)

THE SLEEPY TIME GAL
Christopher Münch's drama about a mother and writer (Jacqueline Bisset) who, after learning she has cancer, embarks upon a search for the daughter she gave up for adoption many years before. The cast includes Martha Plimpton, Nick Stahl, and Seymour Cassel. Opening May 29. (Pioneer.)

THE SUM OF ALL FEARS
Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. Opening May 31.

UNDERCOVER BROTHER
Malcolm D. Lee directed this blaxploitation comedy in which a private eye (Eddie Griffin), disguised as a preppy executive, infiltrates an evildoing corporation. With Denise Richards and Chris Kattan. Opening May 31.

FILM NOTES

ABOUT A BOY
Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. (Battery Park 16, Beekman, East 86th Street Cinemas, Empire 25, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, 19th Street East 6, 34th Street Theatre, and Village Theatre VII.)

BARTLEBY
You might prefer a more cheerful movie, but Jonathan Parker's adaptation of "Bartleby, the Scrivener" gets to you. Herman Melville wrote this short story, about a legal copyist who refuses to work, after the disappointing publications of "Moby-Dick" and "Pierre." Parker sets the action in a drably colored modern office, so generic that it's camp. Crispin Glover, with his shock of black hair and wispy white face, is an impressive Bartleby; he pulls off the neat trick of being passive yet dangerous. He's also a maddening cipher: when he's staring up at the office vent, it's hard to tell if Bartleby has embraced the wisdom of no escape or if he's just spaced out. The veterans who round out the cast provide the needed comic relief, especially Glenne Headly as the firm's hypercordial secretary, a sex-pot with flawless diction.—*Michael Agger* (Village East Cinemas.)

THE BELIEVER
There is considerable power and daring in Henry Bean's intense drama about a young Jewish Nazi in New York. Danny Balint is an intellectual trying to succeed as a thug; he beats up the studious yeshiva students he sees on the New York subway because he wants to destroy who he once was. His hatred of Jews is based not on the belief that they are too powerful but rather that they are not powerful enough. Bean doesn't quite open the material up visually—he's more a writer than a director—but the canny young actor Ryan Gosling is magnetic as the confused Danny, who is never more Jewish than at those moments when he is trying to escape Judaism.—*David Denby* (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas and Village East Cinemas.)

BLESSED EVENT
Probably nobody in Hollywood history was better at the art of timing and placing a wisecrack than Lee Tracy. (He used his hands as much as his voice.) In this 1932 newspaper comedy-satire based on the rise of the fast-talking gossip columnist Walter Winchell, Tracy shows his peerless style—he can get a sob in his voice for the benefit of his radio listeners while grinning at his intimates. It's quick and breezy and very likable.—*Pauline Kael* (Film Forum; May 29.)

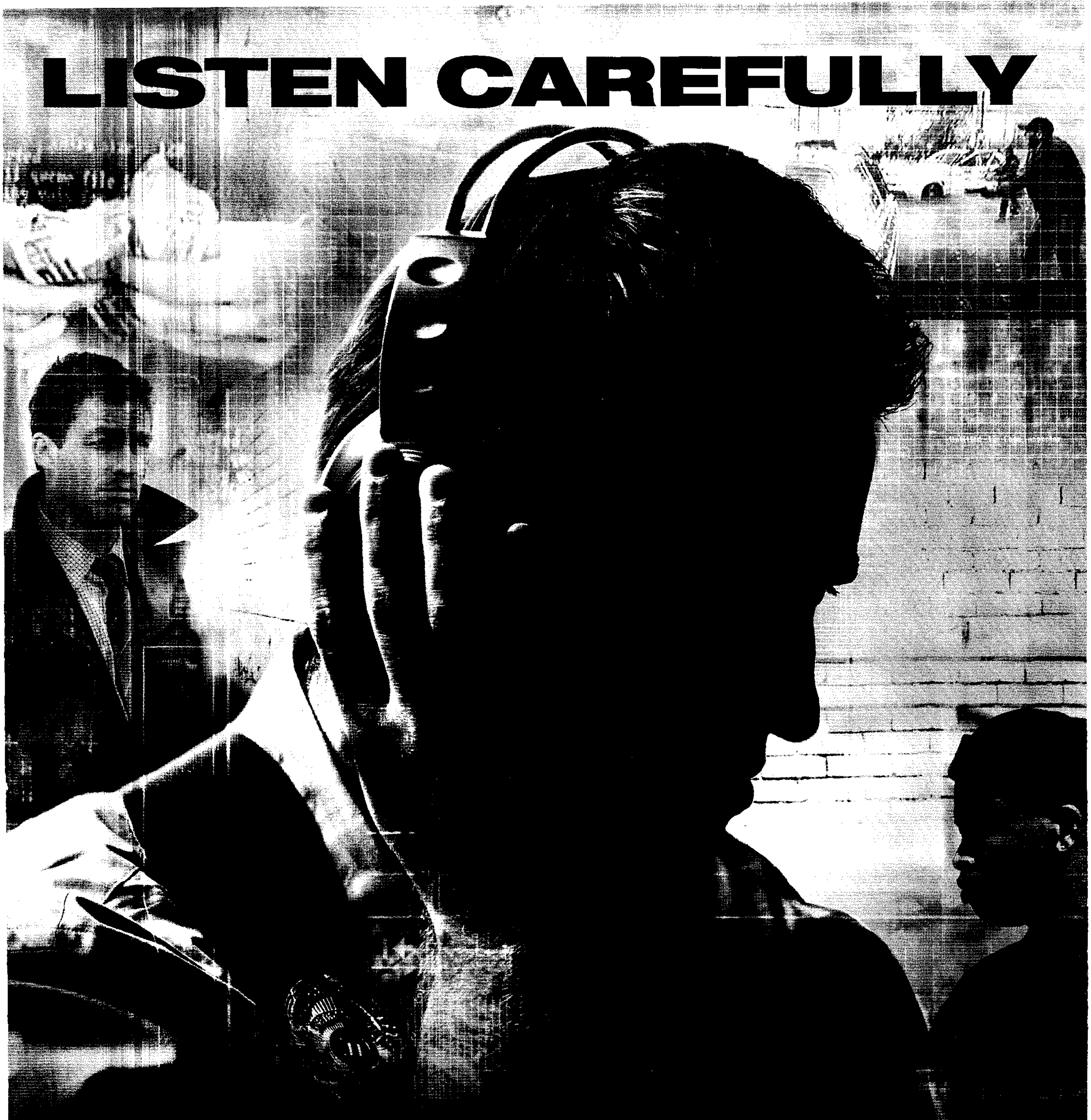
BUFFET FROID
In Bertrand Blier's atypically frigid 1979 curiosity, which the writer-director says has something to do with "violence and complacency," Gérard Depardieu plays a woebegone fellow who loses a knife in a nearly deserted subway station. When it ends up in the belly of an overworked accountant, our antihero can't remember murdering him; indeed, it never becomes entirely clear whether he really kills people or is caught up in an inexplicable nightmare. His new neighbor in an almost empty high-rise, a police inspector (played by Blier's father, Bernard), is either wonderfully well adjusted or crazy: when Depardieu tells him of the accountant's murder, he says he doesn't want to worry about murder during his off-hours. When a third major character emerges—Jean Carmet, as an assassin who kills only women—you see that everyone except Depardieu has made a private peace with homicide. The funniest moment here comes when the fearsomely blank cop, who hates string music, is forced to listen to Brahms's Quintet in G Major. In French.—*Michael Sragow* (Florence Gould Hall; June 4.)

CHANGING LANES
A young corporate lawyer (Ben Affleck) and a troubled father who works as an insurance salesman (Samuel L. Jackson) get into a minor collision on the F.D.R. Drive, and instead of just letting the damn thing go, they spend the rest of the day tormenting each other. The plot, with its matched, escalating acts of revenge, may be a contrivance, but the movie plays earnestly and well. The real subject is not revenge, but the malevolence inherent in a competitive society that occasionally breaks through the surface. Much of the writing (by Chap Taylor and Michael Tolkin) is either affecting or gratifyingly nasty. The final surprise: Ben Affleck grows up and gives the first good performance of his life.—*D.D.* (Reviewed in our issue of 5/6/02.) (Battery Park 16, 84th Street Sixplex, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, New York Twin, Orpheum VII, and 34th Street Theatre.)

CQ
An ambitious début film, written and directed by Roman Coppola (son of Francis, brother of Sofia) that aims to have the irreverent hum of Fellini's "8 1/2," Truffaut's "Day for Night," and Vadim's "Barbarella," for starters. The plot, as such, concerns an editor turned director (Jeremy Davies with an Antoine Doinel haircut) who lands in the revolutionary Paris of 1969, where he's given the assignment of polishing off a cheesy Italian science-fiction spy flick. "CQ" looks terrific, thanks to the production design of a master, Dean Tavoularis, but Coppola's relentless referencing of other mov-

JOHN RITTER

Opening May 29, Sven Nordin and Per Christian Ellefsen in "Elling," a comedy from Norway.



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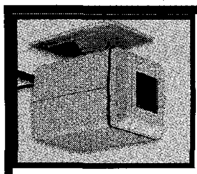
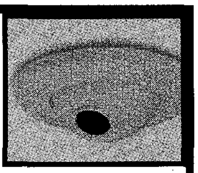




LITTLE CAMERAS EVERYWHERE

A discussion with surveillance expert William Staples

Even with the increasing sophistication of crime and criminals, gut instincts like observation and deduction remain the primary tools of law enforcement. Electronic surveillance is an evolving tool that has the ability to refine those instincts, but it also has the potential to blur them. Like any weapon, surveillance when used correctly can tip the balance in a crusade against crime, but when abused, its side effects can bear a higher price than any society is willing to pay. Providing some expert testimony on the topic of surveillance is William Staples, sociology professor at the University of Kansas and author of "Everyday Surveillance: Vigilance and Visibility in Postmodern Life" (Rowman & Littlefield).

Q. How prevalent is police and government surveillance?
A. Typically the government uses surveillance in two ways. The first targets people under investigation after a footwork inquiry. This may involve video, listening devices, and other technologies aimed at a particular suspect. The other form of surveillance does not specify a person. The technology could be a thermal imaging device searching for pot growers or video cameras that continually scan the streets. Another example is facial-recognition software used at the Super Bowl.

Q. Is there anything wrong with this trend?
A. Our justice system is based on the idea of "innocent until proven guilty" and "probable cause." When you start monitoring people en masse, you're on a fishing expedition.

Q. Are there rules for government surveillance?
A. The laws vary so much, we end up with a hodgepodge. In South Dakota, for example, DNA samples are routinely taken at the time of arrest. In Washington, D.C. the Metropolitan Police Department has set up an extensive public surveillance system without consulting the citizens and their representatives on the District Council. But for the FBI and its well-known Carnivore system, a court must conclude that there's probable cause before they can start tracking E-mails.

Q. So, then, is Big Brother really watching?
A. Not likely. It's more probable that private organizations are. I use the term "Tiny Brothers"—organizations and individuals trying to keep us in line—to describe this trend.

Q. Are these "Tiny Brothers" like security cameras in the convenience store?
A. They can be cameras, drug-testing kits, or "E-Z Pass" highway scanners. Tiny Brothers just sit there and soak up information like data sponges.

Q. Does the government ever use information gathered from these Tiny Brothers?
A. They have, and I think it should be of concern when the police demands results of an on-the-job drug test, videotapes from private security cameras, and so on. These private organizations are then acting as a surrogate investigative arm with less judicial oversight or legal restrictions.

Q. But some surveillance is good, isn't it?
A. There are times when community needs outweigh personal privacy issues. A shopping mall security camera catches somebody kidnapping a child, and everyone thinks, "Thank goodness for the camera!" But how many times does that happen? Those things aren't being debated.

Q. What's the biggest surveillance trend in the last few years?
A. I'd say it's the proliferation of surveillance devices in the hands of ordinary citizens. Parents are using phone-taping devices and drug testing kits to watch over their kids; wireless video cameras are being sold for watching babysitters. The line between voyeurism and surveillance is very thin.

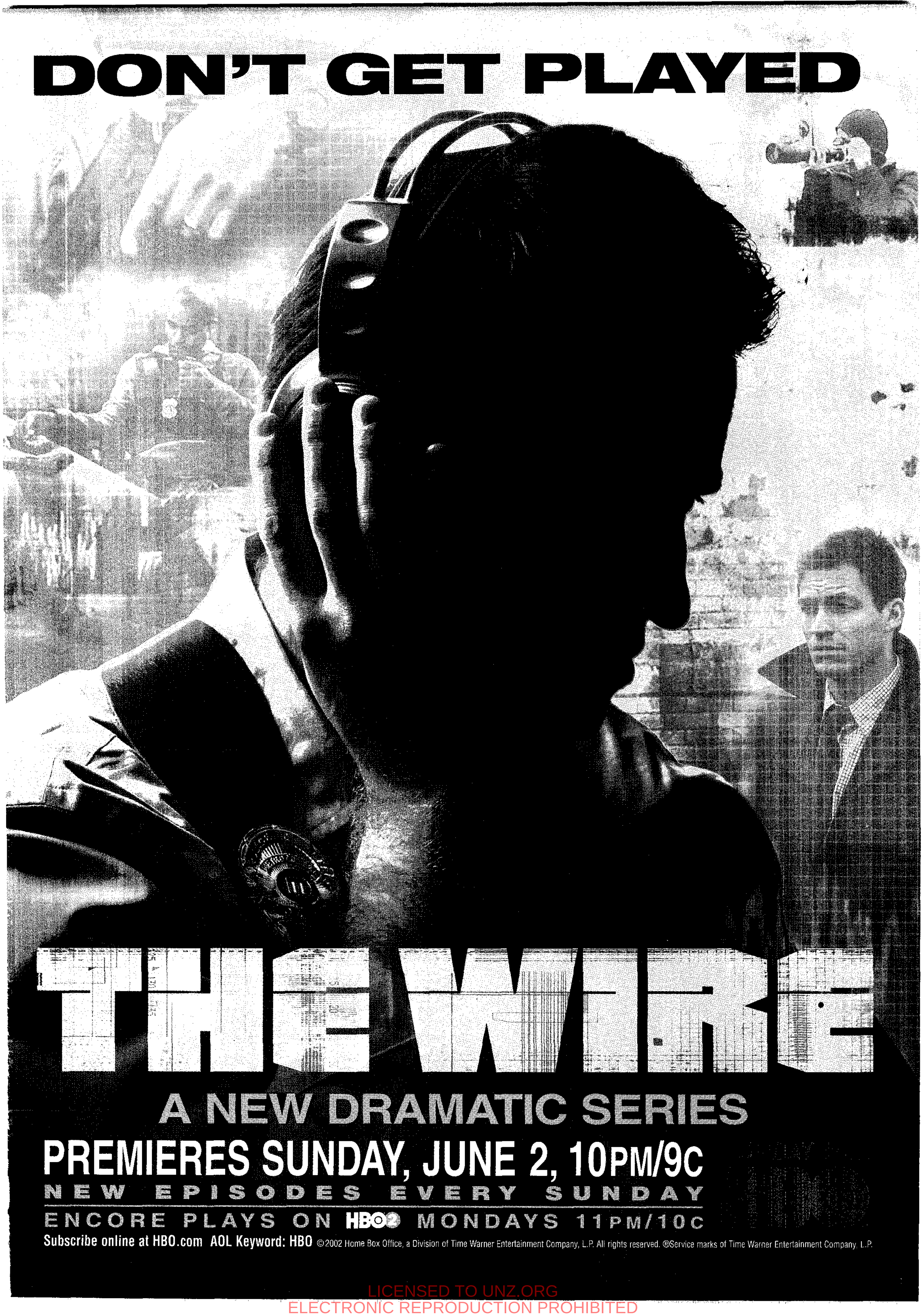
Q. The technology has gotten so miniaturized it's unobtrusive: cameras disguised as brooches or hidden in teddy bears (to keep track of the babysitter).
A. They're getting smaller, cheaper, and more efficient. Think about it: when Supreme Court Justices Brandeis and Warren championed the "right to be left alone" over a hundred years ago, they were concerned about the telephone and the telegraph. We now live in a world where you can buy facial recognition software for $29.95.

Q. How justified is surveillance?
A. I think it's justified only to the extent that authorities—both public and private—make the case that a problem exists. Surveillance may be prudent when drug trafficking, employee theft, or terrorism is involved. But as we turn more and more to these devices for what I call everyday surveillance, I think we'll need better laws, more regulation, and judicial oversight.

Q. No one seems particularly worried about everyday surveillance.
A. They're more insidious than Big Brother. Big Brother is a jackboot on the neck. But these tiny devices—because they're so small and seemingly innocuous—don't generate much resistance.

Q. What can individuals do to deter surveillance?
A. There are some practical things. Protect your personal information. Don't use your Social Security number, even if businesses ask for it. If you use the Internet, learn about security functions and don't do business with companies without a privacy policy. And think before you support a new surveillance practice in your own community. What's used on others can be used on you. ●

photos courtesy of 123 CCTV at www.123cctv.com



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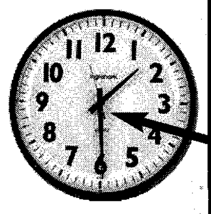
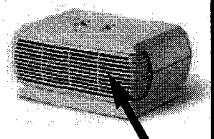
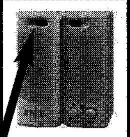
SURVEILLANCE IN SMALL PLACES



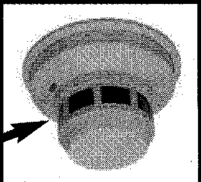
WALL CLOCK



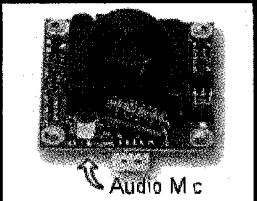
AIR CLEANER



COMPUTER SPEAKERS

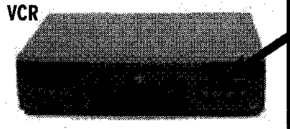


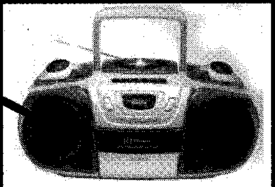
SMOKE DETECTOR



'PINHOLE BOARD' CAMERA: IT COMES PREINSTALLED IN THESE DEVICES

VCR





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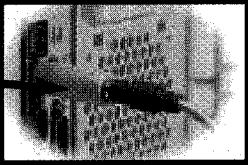
YOU ARE BEING WATCHED

According to author and surveillance expert William Staples, there are two categories of surveillance, "Hard" and "Soft." Hard surveillance devices are those that are obvious and even confrontational: the security camera in the ATM, metal detectors, random drug testing. Soft surveillance, however, takes place behind the scenes—the collection of personal information for marketing purposes, for example. Because it's not immediately threatening, Soft surveillance seems benign. With certain safeguards, both means of surveillance can be used if you're under investigation.

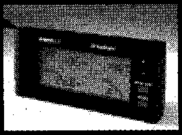


COMPUTER AND WEB TRACKING

Business interests can track your Internet usage and your credit history.

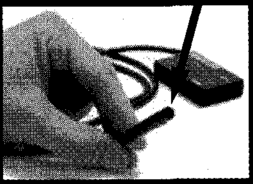
UNDERCOVER VEST CAMERA

A plainclothes cop may come equipped with a camera to film your confession.



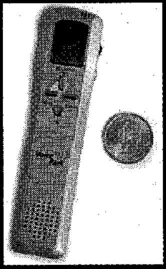
CAR SURVEILLANCE

Parents can use this device to track their children's driving. Your employer can use it in the company car.



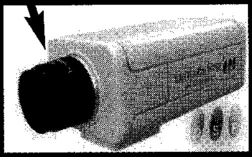
FIBER-OPTIC SNAKE CAMERA

This color video camera can slide right under your door.



MINI DIGITAL RECORDER

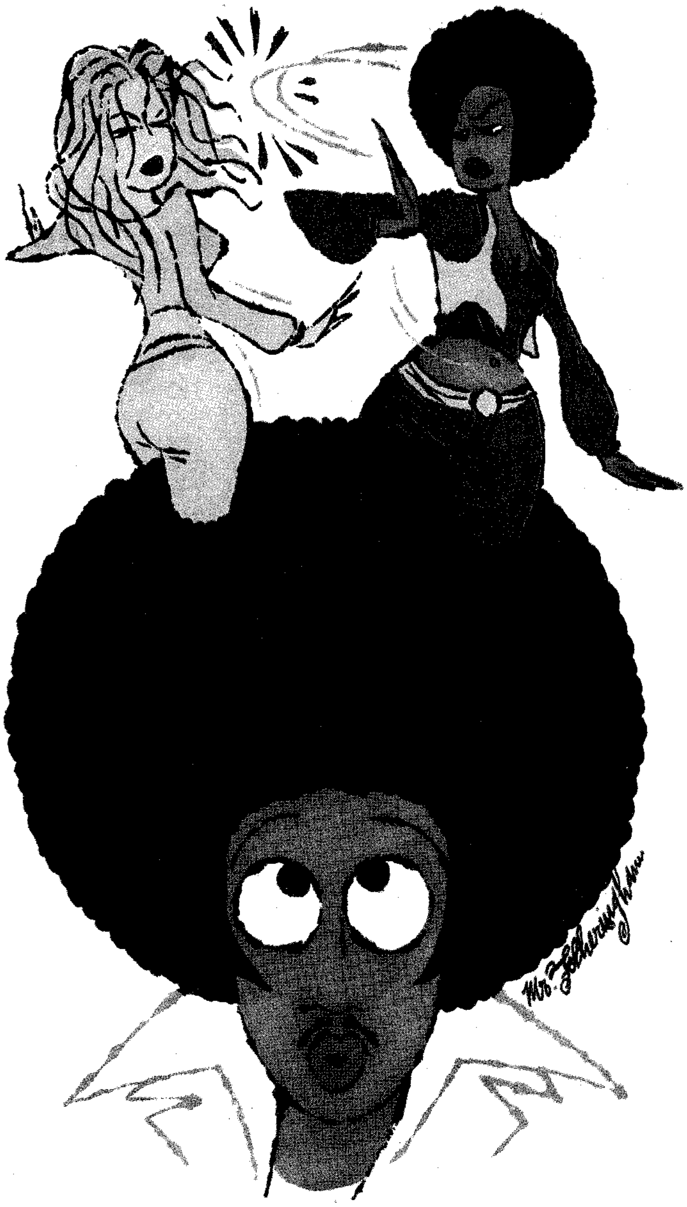
Compare the size of this audio recorder with the quarter on its right.



LOW-LIGHT SECURITY CAMERA

It may look like a standard security camera, but this one automatically adjusts to ultra-low light situations.

photos courtesy of 123 CCTV at www.123cctv.com; Carl's Electronics at www.electronickits.com; First Defense International Group at www.firmseeker.com; Spylife at www.spylife.com and www.spygamez.com



Denise Richards, Aunjanue Ellis, and Eddie Griffin in "Undercover Brother."

EDWIN FOTHERINGHAM

ies dilutes the drama; each scene becomes another film-student pleasure.—*Bruce Diones* (Angelika Film Center and Eastside Playhouse.)

THE EARRINGS OF MADAME DE . . .
Perfection. This tragedy of love, which begins in narcissistic flirtation and passes from romance to passion to desperation, is set, ironically, in aristocratic circles that seem too superficial to take love tragically. The very beauty of Max Ophüls's 1953 film is sometimes used against it: the gliding, sensuous camerawork, the extraordinary romantic atmosphere, the gowns, the balls, the chandeliers, the nuances of language, and the sense of honor are regarded as evidence of lack of substance. But Ophüls loved Mozart and Stendhal, and he also calls up a third master: the opera sequence that gives the film its musical theme is Gluck's "Orfeo." The performances by Danielle Darrieux as Madame de, by Charles Boyer as her husband, Monsieur de, a general, and by Vittorio De Sica as her lover, the Baron, are quite likely the finest each has given. Ophüls's lush, decorative style, his re-creation of a vanished elegance, and his darting, swirling camera are used to evoke the protection that style and manners and wealth provide, and to demonstrate that passion can destroy it all. In French.—*P.K.* (Thalia Theatre; June 1-2.)

HOLLYWOOD ENDING
Woody Allen casts himself as the washed-up movie director Val Waxman, a real pain in the neck. Téa Leoni, she of the puckered mouth and long, lean body (here draped in cashmere), is his ex-wife, Ellie, who prevails on her current boyfriend—a smoothly dominating studio boss (Treat Williams)—to give Val one last chance at a big-budget picture. As the shoot begins, Val is afflicted by hysterical blindness, and various people serve as seeing-eye dogs, though no one on the set notices he's sightless. The movie is a farce, of course, but it's still awkwardly literal. A conceit that might have worked in a Chaplin two-reeler nearly destroys a full-length feature, and the pairing of the older Allen and the exquisite Leoni is embarrassing.—*D.D.* (5/20/02) (Battery Park 16, 84th Street Sixplex, and First & 62nd Cinemas.)

THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING EARNEST
An impish, sunny, and perfectly unnecessary production of the Wilde classic, directed by Oliver Parker. The Anthony Asquith version, from 1952, was stagey and artificial, which felt right for Wilde's confection. This movie is set in a counterfeit London of top hats, naughty music-hall girls, and primitive automobiles. Frances O'Connor, as Gwendolen Fairfax, is sexually very knowing, and gets the name Ernest tattooed on her rump. Colin Firth is a good Jack Worthing, but Rupert Everett's limited comic resources are exposed in the role of Algernon—he's arch rather than funny. Judi Dench makes the odd mistake of playing Lady Bracknell as if she were a real person, rather than the most entertaining caricature in the history of the theatre. With Edward Fox, who mumbles superbly as Algie's rarely paid manservant.—*D.D.* (Angelika Film Center and Paris.)

INSOMNIA
A dark and fidgety picture from Christopher Nolan, who made such a splash with "Memento." Al Pacino plays Will Dormer, a detective from Los Angeles, who is flown to the wilds of Alaska (couldn't they find anyone closer?) to unravel a nasty, intractable killing. Soon, he is fouled up in another death, which everyone hopes was accidental. Meanwhile, a local suspect (Robin Williams) shows his face, or, at any rate, gives Dormer something to run after. The ensuing chase scenes are the best thing in the film: Nolan's busy, ravenous technique has something to bite on. The rest of the movie shows what happens when a style goes in search of a mystery; the fretful power play of the two leads, like the cop's yawning sleeplessness, seems not so much grounded in character as applied like makeup. Still, Nolan's depiction of desolate backwaters is immaculate, and the women in the tale—Hilary Swank as a perky cop and Maura Tierney as the sad-faced keeper of the hotel—somehow leaven the air of contrivance.—*Anthony Lane* (5/27/02) (BAM Rose Cinemas, Battery Park 16, Cinema 1, East 86th Street Cinemas, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, 19th Street East 6, 34th Street Theatre, and Village Theatre VII.)

THE LADY AND THE DUKE
The latest project from the unstoppable Eric Rohmer (who, at the age of eighty-two, seems as resourceful as ever) is set during the bloodier travails of the French Revolution. A resident Englishwoman (Lucy Russell) finds that her safety in Paris is threatened, first by her ill-advised monarchism, and then by her continuing devotion to the Duke of Orleans (Jean-Claude Dreyfus), whose own Republican credentials start to crumble. As so often, Rohmer seems to be challenging himself to make as talkative a film as possible without actually sabotaging the dramatic tension; on top of that, he has shot his costumed characters on digital video, against painted cityscapes that could hardly be mistaken for the real thing. Fortunately, the plight of his heroine is just about fraught enough to survive these contrivances, and it is fun to imagine French audiences, schooled in the glories of the period, watching the parade of squabbles, whispers, and petty suspicions that is staged by a skeptical director. In French.—*A.L.* (5/13/02) (BAM Rose Cinemas, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, and Quad Cinema.)

LATE MARRIAGE
An Israeli in his early thirties, Zaza (Lior Ashkenazi) has all the rueful moroseness that you would expect to find in a graduate student in philosophy. He is also marriageable but single, a predicament that drives his parents to despair. The cause of such diffidence, even when Zaza is faced with prospective brides of unquestionable beauty, can be traced to his secret girlfriend, Judith (Ronit Elkabetz), a divorced mother of one. Dover Koshashvili's film swings back and forth between the hero's family, with their impositions and great expectations, and the loving, liberated randiness of his semi-hidden life. Up to the end, you are kept guessing as to which will prevail. In Georgian and Hebrew.—*A.L.* (5/27/02) (Cinema Village and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

MY BIG FAT GREEK WEDDING
The Second City comic performer Nia Vardalos lights up this low-budget "Moonstruck" about a homely girl and her overly dramatic Greek-immigrant family. When, after a quick makeover, she falls in love with a charming Wasp (John Corbett), her mother, father, and assorted relatives play the inevitable culture clash to the hilt. (Much of this material has been culled from Vardalos's effective standup routines.) The cast includes the wonderfully dotty Andrea Martin, Michael Constantine as the ouzo-swigging dad, and everyone's favorite ethnic mom, Lainie Kazan. They bring a pleasant sitcom buzz to the movie.—*B.D.* (Battery Park 16, Chelsea Cinemas, 84th Street Sixplex, Empire 25, First & 62nd Cinemas, and Village East Cinemas.)

ONCE IN A LIFETIME
The young, unknown Moss Hart wrote a satire of Hollywood in the transition from silents to talkies. The Broadway producer Sam Harris accepted it

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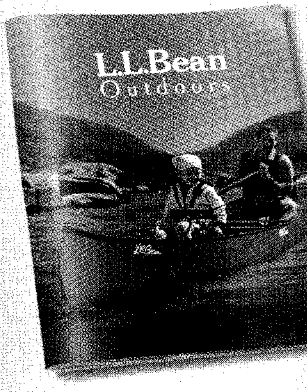

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and signed George S. Kaufman, the reigning young playwright, to collaborate. After nine nerve-racking months of revisions, Kaufman and Hart had the smash of 1930, and the team lasted for ten historic and incredibly profitable years (what Broadway joined together, psychoanalysis put asunder). They created bustling, congested wisecrack-piled-on-wisecrack comedies; their calculated silliness adds more than enough to each situation, and in going beyond your expectations it can double you up and put you helplessly at the mercy of the next excess. The picture isn't particularly well made, but it's a true period piece—a reminder of the beginnings of a type of Broadway lampoon-comedy, and it has a lovely corny triviality and innocence. With moon-faced Jack Oakie as the good-hearted imbecilic vaudevillian who in Hollywood is taken for a genius.—*P.K.* (Film Forum; June 4.)

SPIDER-MAN

The perils and advantages of being bitten by a genetically modified spider are made abundantly clear in Sam Raimi's enjoyable, if broken-backed, exercise in high-cost pulp. Tobey Maguire plays Peter Parker, who develops a useful ability to hurl threads of web from his wrists and thus becomes, to his delight, the highest swinger in town. This prowess earns him the adoration of Mary Jane (Kirsten Dunst) and the enmity of the Green Goblin (Willem Dafoe), whose infinite capacity for evil is slightly undercut by the fact that he began life as a man called Norman. The movie is all over the place, unable to decide, for instance, whether New York should be shot as a livable city or as a Gothamite gulf of crime; similarly, Dafoe delivers a cartoon while Maguire offers a funny, rueful study in uncertain heroics.—*A.L.* (5/13/02) (Astor Plaza, Battery Park 16, Chelsea West, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Metro Twin, Orpheum VII, 64th and 2nd, 34th Street Theatre, and Union Square.)

**STAR WARS:
EPISODE II—ATTACK OF THE CLONES**

The Republic? The Federation? The Separatists? The clone army? The droid army? The Siths? The Kith? The Kin? The plot is incomprehensible to anyone over fourteen, and the actors intone their starched-collar lines as if they were attending a convention of rural vicars. But, allowing for some dull moments, George Lucas's latest movie has considerable style. Digital invention is becoming grander, wilder, more free-spirited: the multi-levelled cities of the past overflow with life. It would be nice to think that Lucas's visual imagination is just now taking off.—*D.D.* (5/20/02) (Battery Park 16, Chelsea Cinemas, Empire 25, Murray Hill Cinemas, Olympia I and II, Park & 86th Street Cinemas, 64th and 2nd, Union Square, and Ziegfeld.)

UNFAITHFUL

Connie (Diane Lane), a suburban New York housewife, gets picked up in SoHo by a sexy young Frenchman (Olivier Martinez) and falls into a passionate afternoons-only affair; her husband, Edward (Richard Gere), senses from the beginning that something is amiss. The director Adrian Lyne has been making erotic dramas for years, and this is his most earnest and nonexploitative effort to date. The movie is very scrupulous about the feelings of Connie and Edward and the damage adultery can do to a family. If only the characters were more interesting. The three principals have no dimensions beyond what's functionally required by the situation, and we can't quite tell if the husband and wife are silent because their marriage is a zero or because the screenwriters forgot to give them something to say. Lane goes through the stages of denial, resistance, joy, and guilt with virtuoso ability; Gere, looking a little older these days, is quiet and saddened—it's amusing to see him wearing the horns for a change. The movie is based on Claude Chabrol's 1969 thriller "La Femme Infidèle," but it lacks the cool perversity of the original; it's a highly responsible sex movie.—*D.D.* (Battery Park 16, Chelsea Cinemas, East 85th Street, Empire 25, First & 62nd Cinemas, Murray Hill Cinemas, 62nd & Broadway, and Village East Cinemas.)

Y TU MAMÁ TAMBIÉN

The latest movie from the Mexican director Alfonso Cuarón is a stripped-down road movie: two teenage friends, one rich (Diego Luna) and one poor (Gael García Bernal), borrow a car and set off to find the perfect beach, in the company of a Spanish woman (Maribel Verdú) who is not merely older, but married. Plus, she seems inexplicably happy to take either, or both, of them to bed. All the boys' dreams, in other words, have come true, and they can hardly handle it. What ensues is a sad and sexy picaresque, as everyone's illusions are peeled off along with their clothes. Cuarón's style is so open and relaxed, and his actors are so attuned to one another, that not until the final scene, with its litany of revelations, do we see that what felt life-affirming has also been a meditation on the slide of time, and on the off-stage presence of death. Unrated, and therefore full of proper sex, with all the improprieties intact. In Spanish.—*A.L.* (3/18/02) (BAM Rose Cinemas, Empire 25, First & 62nd Cinemas, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, 19th Street East 6, Sunshine Cinema, and 34th Street Theatre.)

ALSO PLAYING

CREMASTER 3
Film Forum.

DOGTOWN AND Z-BOYS
Angelika Film Center.

KISSING JESSICA STEIN
Empire 25, 59th Street East Cinemas, Metro Twin, and Sunshine Cinema.

MONSOON WEDDING (2/18 & 25/02)
First & 62nd Cinemas, Sunshine Cinema, and 34th Street Theatre.

THE PIANO TEACHER (4/1/02)
Cinema Village.

THIRTEEN CONVERSATIONS ABOUT ONE THING
Empire 25, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, and Sunshine Cinema.

THEATRE ADDRESSES

Unless noted, call 777-FILM for show times.

Angelika Film Center, 18 W. Houston St.
Astor Plaza, 44th St. at Broadway.
BAM Rose Cinemas, 30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn.
Battery Park 16, West St. at Vesey St.
Beekman, Second Ave. at 66th St.
Chelsea Cinemas, 260 W. 23rd St.
Chelsea West, 333 W. 23rd St.
Cinemas 1, 2, and 3, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema Village, 22 E. 12th St. (924-3363).
East 86th Street Cinemas, Third Ave. at 86th St.
84th Street Sixplex, Broadway at 84th St.
Empire 25, on 42nd St. near Eighth Ave. (398-3939).
59th Street East Cinema, 239 E. 59th St.
Film Forum, W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (727-8110).
First & 62nd Cinemas, 400 E. 62nd St.
42nd Street E Walk, 42nd St. near Eighth Ave.
Kips Bay Theatre, Second Ave. at 32nd St.
Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, Broadway at 63rd St.
Lincoln Square, Broadway at 68th St.
Metro Twin, Broadway at 99th St.
Murray Hill Cinemas, 160 E. 34th St.
New York Twin, Second Ave. at 67th St.
19th Street East 6, Broadway at 19th St.
Olympia I and II, Broadway at 107th St.
Orpheum VII, Third Ave. at 86th St.
Paris, 4 W. 58th St. (688-3800).
Park & 86th Street Cinemas, 125 E. 86th St.
Pioneer, 155 E. 3rd St. (254-3300).
Quad Cinema, 34 W. 13th St.
The Screening Room, 54 Varick St. (334-2100).
72nd Street East, Third Ave. at 71st St.
64th and 2nd, Second Ave. at 64th St.
62nd & Broadway, 62 W. 62nd St.
Sunshine Cinema, 139-143 E. Houston St.
Sutton 1 and 2, Third Ave. at 57th St.

34th Street Theatre, 312 W. 34th St.
Union Square, Broadway at 13th St.
Village East Cinemas, Second Ave. at 12th St.
Village Theatre VII, Third Ave. at 11th St.
Ziegfeld, 141 W. 54th St.

REVIVALS, CLASSICS, ETC.

Titles with a dagger are reviewed above.

AMERICAN MUSEUM OF THE MOVING IMAGE
35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria (718-784-0077)—"Rescued Treasures," restored films. June 1 at 1: "Mad Max" (1979, George Miller). ♦ June 1 at 4: "Easy Rider" (1969, Dennis Hopper). ♦ June 2 at 2: "Spellbound" (1945, Alfred Hitchcock). ♦ June 2 at 4: "Portrait of Jennie" (1948, William Dieterle). ♦ Repertory nights. June 1-2 at 6:30: "The Blue Angel" (1930, Josef Von Sternberg; in German).

ANTHOLOGY FILM ARCHIVES
32 Second Ave., at 2nd St. (505-5110)—May 29-31: "Investigation of a Flame: A Documentary Portrait of the Catonsville Nine" (2001, Lynne Sachs). ♦ May 30-June 2: "High Hopes" (1988, Mike Leigh). ♦ May 30 and June 1-2: "Life Is Sweet" (1991, Leigh). ♦ May 31-June 2: "Naked" (1993, Leigh).

BAM ROSE CINEMAS
30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn (718-777-3456)—Dance Africa. May 29-30 at 4:30, 6:50, and 9:10: "Sia, the Python's Dream" (2001, Dani Kouyaté; in French). ♦ Best undistributed films. May 31-June 4: "The Mad Songs of Fernanda Hussein" (2001, John Gianvito).

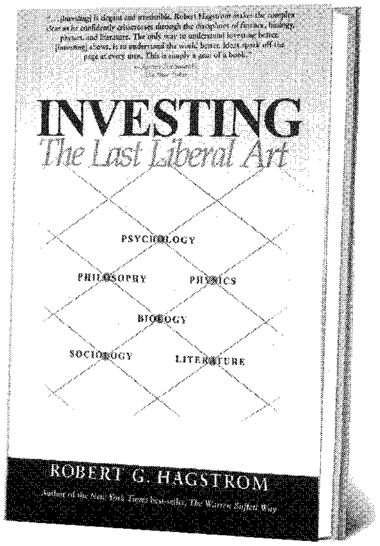
FILM FORUM
W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (727-8110)—Through June 6: "The Great American Comedy." May 29 at 1, 4:25, and 7:50: "His Girl Friday" (1940, Howard Hawks). ♦ May 29 at 2:45, 6:10, and 9:35: "Blessed Event" (†). ♦ May 30 at 1:10, 5:20, and 9:30: "The More the Merrier" (1943, George Stevens). ♦ May 30 at 3:10 and 7:20: "Mr. Deeds Goes to Town" (1936, Frank Capra). ♦ May 31 and June 1 at 1, 4:10, 7:15, and 10:20: "Man on the Flying Trapeze" (1935, Clyde Bruckman). ♦ May 31 and June 1 at 2:20, 5:30, and 8:35: "It's a Gift" (1934, N. Z. McLeod). ♦ June 2 at 1, 3:50, 6:40, and 9:30 and June 3 at 1 and 3:50: "It's a Mad, Mad, Mad, Mad World" (1963, Stanley Kramer). ♦ June 3 at 7 and 8:45: "Speedy" (1928, Ted Wilde). ♦ June 4 at 1:10, 4:30, and 7:50: "Once in a Lifetime" (†). ♦ June 4 at 2:50, 6:10, and 9:30: "Show People" (1928, King Vidor).

FLORENCE GOULD HALL
55 E. 59th St. (355-6160)—The films of Bertrand Blier. June 4 at 12:30, 3:30, 6:30, and 9: "Buffet Froid" (†).

THE GOLDEN AGE OF CINEMA FESTIVAL
Cantor Film Center, 36 E. 8th St. (917-750-3651)—June 4 at 6:30: "Jacob's Ladder" (1990, Adrian Lyne), followed by an interview with Tim Robbins.

THALIA THEATRE
2537 Broadway at 95th St. (864-5400)—Classic French cinema. The 1 P.M. screenings are double features. June 1 at 1, 5:15, and 7:30 and June 2 at 1: "French Cancan" (1955, Jean Renoir). ♦ June 1 at 3 and June 2 at 3, 5:30, and 8: "The Earrings of Madame de . . ." (†).

WALTER READE THEATRE
Lincoln Center (875-5600)—Through May 30: "Malcolm McDowell: Insolent Angel." May 29 at 2: "Get Crazy" (1983, Allan Arkush). ♦ May 29 at 4 and May 30 at 9: "A Clockwork Orange" (1971, Stanley Kubrick). ♦ May 29 at 7: "O Lucky Man!" (1973, Lindsay Anderson). ♦ May 30 at 1: "Britannia Hospital" (1982, Anderson). ♦ May 30 at 3:30: "If . . ." (1968, Anderson). ♦ Through June 12: "Open Roads: New Italian Cinema." May 31 at 1 and 6:45 and June 1 at 3:45: "The Last Kiss" (2001, Gabriele Muccino). ♦ May 31 at 3:45 and 9:20 and June 2 at 3:15: "Light of My Eyes" (2001, Giuseppe Piccioni). ♦ June 1 at 1 and 9:15: "Santa Maradona" (2001, Marco Ponti). ♦ June 1 at 6:30 and June 2 at 8:30: "Sun in My Eyes" (2001, Andrea Porporati). ♦ June 2 at 1: "Winter" (2002, Nina di Majo). ♦ June 2 at 6: "Days" (2001, Laura Muscardin).



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THE NEW YORKER

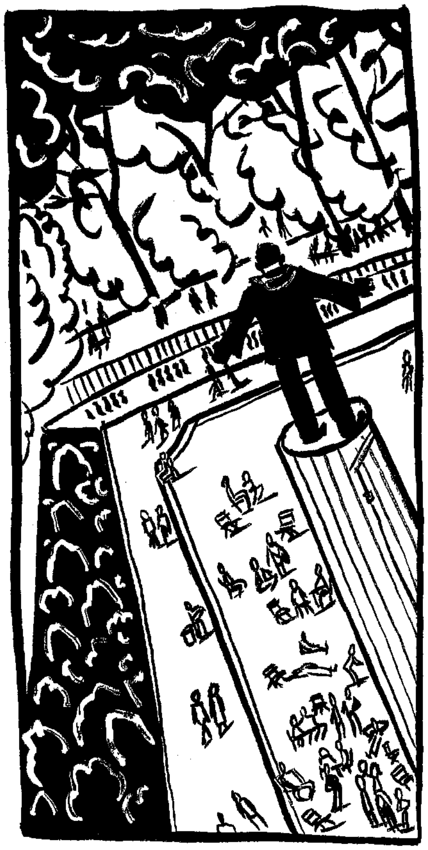
THE TALK OF THE TOWN

COMMENT
UP IN THE AIR

Last week, a man stood on a pole in a park. Then he jumped off. It happened not far from the offices of this magazine, and a few people who work here walked over to watch him. David Blaine, the magician who did the standing and the jumping, is a local boy, from Brooklyn, and in years past he has tried such self-improving stunts as having himself imprisoned in a block of ice in Times Square for three days and being buried alive in a closed coffin on West Sixty-eighth Street for a week. This time, in Bryant Park, he stood for almost thirty-five hours in baggy clothes on a small platform atop a ninety-foot pole.

The strange thing is that this magician wasn't doing anything magical. He was just standing there. For P.R. purposes, Blaine invoked the tony pedigree of certain earlier columnists: the saintly stylites, out there in the Byzantine desert at the dawn of the last Dark Age. But what he was doing, in fact, belongs to a very different, local tradition of doing nothing in midair. They called it flagpole sitting back in the twenties, when it was all the rage in this part of town, and it, too, had its heroes: Alvin (Shipwreck) Kelly, who perched at the top of a sky-high pole above the old Madison Square Garden for twenty-two days and six hours, and fifteen-year-old Avon Foreman, who, over on Broadway, reportedly established the "juvenile flagpole-sitting record"—ten days, ten hours, and ten minutes.

Back then, flagpole sitting was never confused with magic. Magic was what Harry Houdini was doing down the street at the Hippodrome—an office building and parking garage now—struggling in and out of straitjackets, slipping in and out of handcuffs, escaping from locked safes underwater. Magic was work. Magic was activity. Flagpole sitting was simply endurance, its only prerequisite an endless capacity for standing there.



ILLUSTRATIONS BY TOM BACHTELL

That's not magic, that's just a stunt, we think. But each age calls magic whatever stunt it needs to marvel at, and each age gets the magic it deserves. David Blaine, standing up there, is actually as good a magical metaphor for the moment as Houdini, fighting his way out of the straitjacket of immigrant identity toward prosperity, was for his, or David Copperfield, causing whole monuments to disappear while having dubious assignations with supermodels, was for the Gilded Age now in twilight. (He made the Statue of Liberty vanish—a stunt no one even wants to think about now.) David Blaine is the magician as stoic, the magician as the nonmagical bystander, drawing on the ancient Egyptian gods of extremely tedious normality, the magician as the guy from the outer boroughs who just stands there and puts up with it.

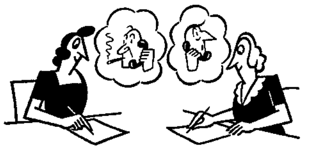
And so are we all. A drawing, a Steinbergian drawing, of New York at the moment would show eight million people, each person standing on a pole above an abyss of anxiety—not looking down, never looking down, looking only from side to side, warily. Yet with so many people perched together, New York life in this hair-raising time looks just like—well, just like New York life, only somehow heightened. We are scared, and we stand there. Our leaders, seemingly, have abandoned the first and oldest principle of leadership—don't panic the troops and always lead from the front—which has long held good for everything from leading armies to victory to leading your kids to the Port-a-John at halftime, and replaced it with a new model: frighten everybody you can and dive into a secure bunker. The bad guys are out for the Statue of Liberty, they're out for the Brooklyn Bridge, they're on the No. 6 train, and they're probably down the hall in 6-F—but don't ask us what you can do about it and don't expect us to join you while you wait. "You're on your own" is the subliminal message we're taking in.

When the magician jumped down at last, late at night, we were almost grateful for his gracelessness: after a clumsy back flop onto cardboard boxes, he emerged, not pumping his fist, triumphant, but huddled in a blanket, his voice shaking. "I'm all right," he said, but his body language seemed to say, It's scary up there, it's scary down here, and it's scary when you're in midair. It is a curious thing to be grateful for a frightened daredevil, yet in some way we are. That is the Great Blaine's queer period appeal: after each stunt he seems to say, in effect, not "I transcended!" but "Hey, fuggetaboutit—I was freezing, I almost lost my mind, I thought I was going to die, this was a lot harder than I thought it was going to be." But he also says, "I'm still here." That's enough magic for now.

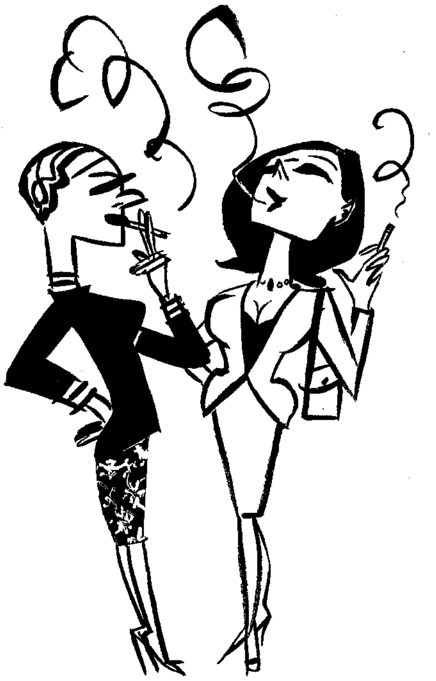
—*Adam Gopnik*

INK

FORMER MOUSEBURGERS OF THE WORLD UNITE



Thirty-five editors of the international editions of *Cosmopolitan* were in New York last week for a conference, and if you had stopped by the Tribeca Grand Hotel, where they were staying, you would have been able to identify members of their party at a glance. You could tell they were *Cosmo* because of the preponderance of smart career-girl suits paired with high heels, and you could tell they were international because so many of them were taking advantage of the hotel's please-smoke-all-you-like policy in the lobby. Hearst, which owns *Cosmopolitan*, brings its foreign editors together every two years in some desirable location—last time it was the Bahamas—to exchange editorial ideas and to bond as disseminators of the *Cosmo* creed, which holds that a woman is entitled to have a job she cares about, a wardrobe filled with cute clothes, and one or more of what American *Cosmo* refers to as "hunks" or "hotties" available to accommodate her considerable sexual appetites.



Cosmo girls

There are now editions of *Cosmo* in forty-seven countries, the newest being in Latvia, and they are all edited by women. The elder stateswoman of the bunch was Marcia Villela Neder, who has been running the Brazilian edition for more than a decade, and whose magazine is generally regarded as the sexiest. (Of Brazilian *Cosmo*, one Hearst executive said, "I dare you to find a dress on those covers.") Others, however, were so new that the ink was barely dry on their business cards. Silvana Mendusic took over at Croatian *Cosmo* only a month ago, having previously been a war correspondent on Croatian television; of her switch in journalistic focus she said, "The adrenaline is the same."

On Monday morning, the editors were addressed by Helen Gurley Brown, the creator of *Cosmo* as we know it, and by Kate White, the current editor of the American edition. Afterward, they filed into the hotel's restaurant for a lunch of seared tuna and salad, and, for those who had been in the *Cosmo* sorority for some years, for reconnection with old friends.

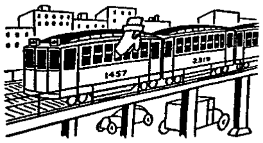
"It's a bit like a cross between the U.N. and Miss World," explained the representative of Australia, Mia Freedman. "First, we exchange baby photos. Then we talk about who's got married and who's got divorced. Then we talk about what we've worn, where we've shopped. It really is a sisterhood." A certain amount of cliquishness is inevitable: the editors from Hong Kong, Taiwan, Korea, and China sat huddled together at one table. Those whose magazines are published in English spoke that language together, even as they agreed that some of their favorite *Cosmo* expressions were untranslatable. "The U.S. edition has been doing a lot about 'booty calls,' and we don't know what those are," Freedman, the Australian, said. "And we talk about 'bonking,' but here they don't know what that is." Certain expressions, even if translatable, were best not translated. The representative of India, thirty-two-year-old Priya Ramani, said that although American *Cosmo* included recommended positions from the Kama Sutra, India, where Tantric sex was invented, is not yet ready for an illustration demonstrating the butterfly position. "It's not like we're not having sex, but discussing female sexuality is not anyone's priority in India," Ramani said. "So we wouldn't use words like 'orgasm' on the cover. We would use 'pleasure.' "

One of the two co-editors of Russian *Cosmo*, Elena Myasnikova, explained how revolutionary her edition had been in a country where revolutions are not taken lightly. "Russians have always been O.K. with sex, but they were very hypocritical, because they wouldn't talk about it," she said. "We were the first serious magazine that talked about sex. The first issue had a cover line, 'Sex or Chocolate,' that was very controversial." (Myasnikova didn't remember what the article was about, but thought it might have had something to do with how you didn't have to choose between them.)

All the editors had to wrestle with the question of how far to conform to indigenous cultural mores, and how much to flout them in the name of *Cosmo*-style women's liberation. The consensus seemed to be that *Cosmo* girls around the world have much more in common than not. The editor of Indonesian *Cosmo*, Reda Gaudiamo, said that her edition had been greeted with great hostility when it was launched, in 1997—"The mullahs said it encouraged women to love sex too much," she explained—and she added that she often has to draw bras on photographs of girls who have appeared topless in other *Cosmos*. But the *Cosmo* message remains intact, if modified. In response to the cultural interdiction on the naming of sex organs in her pages, Gaudiamo said, "We came up with other names. We say 'Mr. Happy' for him and 'Miss Cheerful' for her."

—*Rebecca Mead*

DEPT. OF SAFETY
THE BRIDGE-AND-TUNNEL PROBLEM



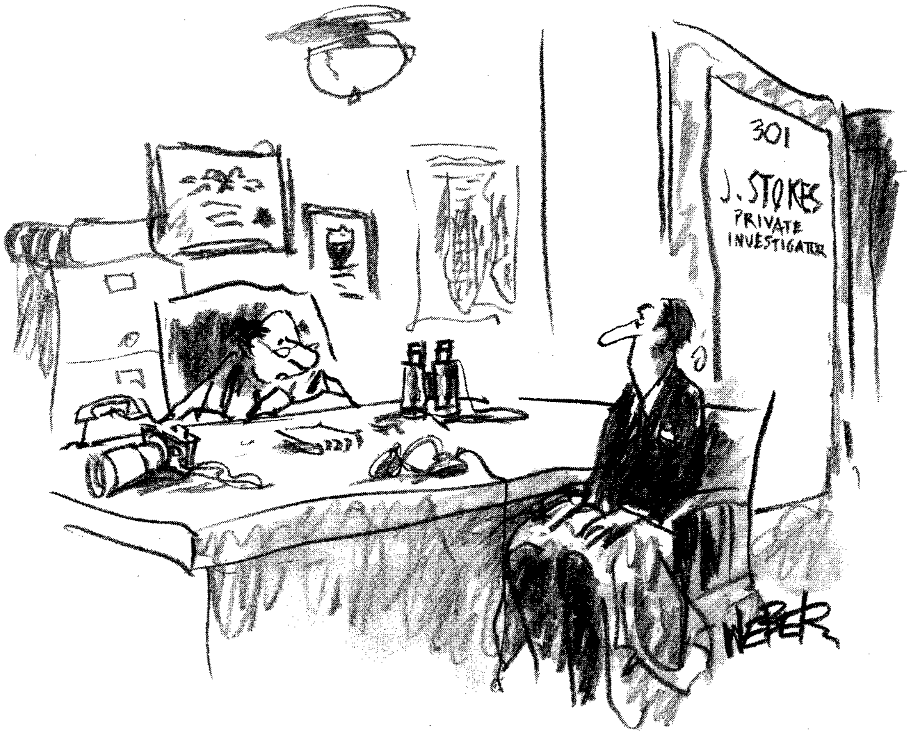
The police began searching trucks and vans at the city's river crossings again last week, following reports that the captured Al Qaeda operative Abu Zubaydah had claimed that his organization was targeting New York City landmarks. Traffic snarled, reminding some people of the epic jam of September 27th, when truck inspections and new restrictions on single-occupancy vehicles helped produce what Department of Transportation Commissioner Iris Weinshall called "the single worst traffic jam in New York City history." But if terrorism does return to New York, and if it comes in the form of a car bomb, one can expect these searches to become routine, and that poses a serious problem. Virtually everything the city consumes and throws away arrives and departs by truck. Without trucks, New York can't function.

Airport security is what people worry about when they think of terrorism, but in fact the overwhelming majority of transportation targets struck by terrorists around the world involve surface transport: bridges, tunnels, roads, rails. David Hensing, a transportation expert at the Science Applications International Corporation (S.A.I.C.), which recently finished a study assessing the vulnerability of bridges and tunnels across the nation, said last week, "This is quite a new thing for people like me. We know a lot about building roads and bridges, but we've never thought about defending them before."

The George Washington Bridge, the city's busiest river crossing, carries 317,618 vehicles a day. The Brooklyn Bridge, which Zubaydah mentioned as a target (and which closed for an hour on Wednesday morning while the police examined a stray backpack), carries 147,767 vehicles a day, but no trucks. How hard would it be to destroy one of these structures? "It would be possible to drop a bridge, if you knew what you were doing," Hensing said. "It would be tough, but you could do it." Maria Lehman, a civil engineer who is the commissioner of Erie County's Department of Public Works, said that the vulnerable spots on any bridge are the towers and the points where the cables attach to the towers. But in New York the bridges are surveyed by cameras, and now by security patrols. "It would be impossible to put a device in a sensitive area without someone noticing," Lehman said.

The East River bridges were all built to carry trains (the Brooklyn Bridge used to have four tracks on it), so they're extremely strong. Samuel I. Schwartz, who, as the chief engineer for the city's Department of Transportation during the nineteen-eighties, became intimately familiar with the East River crossings, said, "I've seen damage to the bridges the equivalent of what a small bomb would do, but it was caused by years of accumulated pigeon droppings and water corrosion, and they didn't cause anything to fall off. And we've fixed all that stuff in the last twenty years."

Still, a truck loaded with explosives and detonated directly under the columns could cause significant damage, which is why it's a good idea to search trucks. But how do you do this without causing traffic chaos? A possible technological solution will make its New York début at the Lincoln Tunnel on Tuesday, May 28th, when the Port Authority tests a machine known as a VACIS. The VACIS (an acronym for "vehicle and cargo inspection system") uses gamma rays to inspect truck cargoes; it has been employed by the U.S. Customs Service at border crossings since the mid-nineties. The machines, which are made by S.A.I.C. and cost about a million dollars



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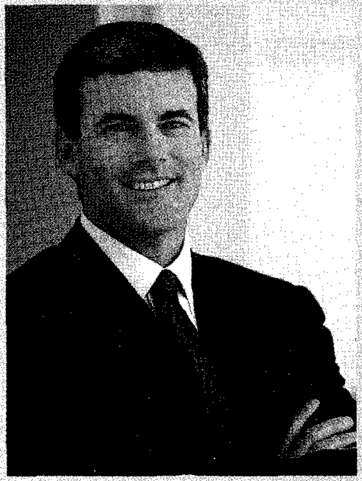

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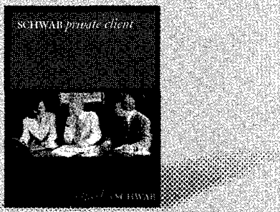

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ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

each, look like the security screeners you walk through in airports, except that they're large enough to accommodate a truck. There are also mobile versions—scanners on wheels—which resemble Viking refrigerators. With both versions, video monitors reveal false compartments, voids, and suspicious-looking materials. Rick Pauza, a U.S. Customs spokesman in Laredo, Texas, where a VACIS is in use, says, "If someone says they've got jalapeño peppers, and it doesn't look like peppers, you stop 'em." The machine can screen a forty-foot container in six seconds.

Other technologies are also available to improve efficiency and security in trucking, such as fingerprint scanning, now in use at some freight terminals at J.F.K., and electronic manifests, which are filed by truckers at their point of origin and forwarded to security officials at their destination. One can imagine a future in which a sort of electronic moat encircles Manhattan—a high-tech version of the watery barrier that was there in the first place, and which the bridges and tunnels were supposed to overcome.

—John Seabrook

POSTMORTEM
TV CRIMEDUSTERS

Carol Mendelsohn was changing her shoes in the limo. "I don't know how many shoes I've ruined at crime scenes," she said, as she stowed her Robert Clergerie flats and put on a pair of nineteen-dollar Lady Foot Locker sneakers. "I've run through so many pairs of Pradas," Ann Donahue said. Anthony Zuiker looked down at his own Armani slippers and crossed his legs complacently.

Mendelsohn, Donahue, and Zuiker are the executive producers of CBS's "C.S.I.: Crime Scene Investigation," the top-rated drama on television. The show improbably romanticizes the grubby world of forensics: its Las Vegas-based investigators decant Luminol onto a victim's carpet as if it were Château Lafite. The producers were in Manhattan for a few days recently to announce a spinoff for the fall—"C.S.I.: Miami," starring David Caruso—and, having the morning free, they were heading to Queens to visit the N.Y.P.D. Crime Lab. "In Vegas the investigators we went around with were so serious," Zuiker said.

"But on our ride-along in Miami," Donahue said, "we saw a guy who'd been dead for three days, naked on his bed with porn playing on the TV, and he was swollen up like Gulliver. First thing the cop did was light a big Cuban cigar to cover the smell."

"The guy was so bloated they shouted, 'Stand back for the piercing!' " Zuiker said. "Then they stabbed his abdomen to release the gases. It was a rocking good time."

At the Forensic Investigations Division on Jamaica Avenue, the producers were met by Dan Austin, a crime-scene and evidence technician. Detective Austin, whose shirt pocket bulged with three pens and a pack of Marlboros, showed them his crisply drawn map of a 1994 shootout in which Wen Ping-Hsu, a Taiwanese Green Beret, took on a squadron of cops. "The individual, who was not a nice individual, had killed his landlord, unbeknownst to anybody, and then he blew his landlord's wife away in front of a congressman here"—Austin stabbed an index finger at the map—"engaged in a shootout with cops, striking two bystanders here and here"—stab, stab—"shot a bystander in the head here, shot an officer in the leg here (an officer who is now walking around with a prosthetic leg), and then engaged in a raging gun battle in the parking garage here. The cops were tossing each other clips and off-duty pieces, trying to skip bullets under cars to get him. What stopped the individual, finally, were .38-calibre bullets, twenty-five of them, that the M.E. dug out of his body, which fell"—heavy stab—"here. Over four hundred and seventy-five pieces of ballistic evidence. We had so many overlays on our map it was incredible."

"Last year," Mendelsohn said, "Ann wrote an episode called 'Blood Drops' that re-created the order of killings in a massacre, based on blood drops, just like that."

Donahue ran her hand over Austin's map. "Network execs used to say these kind of sketches weren't sexy," she said.

"Sketches are very sexy!" Austin said. "Explaining a crime scene to a jury is almost like writing a movie script. You have your beginning, your high point—the shooting—and your dénouement."

"That is why you guys are heroes!" Donahue said. "You're creating order out of chaos."

Zuiker had to return to Manhattan, but Mendelsohn and Donahue went on to the ballistics lab, where they met Detective Kevin Barry, a burly man in a flannel shirt and jeans. He picked a Lorcin 9-mm. handgun off his desk and cocked it, and Donahue threw up an arm and ducked. "There's no magazine in the weapon," Barry said kindly. Explaining that, himself, he hated guns, he took the producers into an anteroom containing a ballistics tank, where he fired a Smith & Wesson .38 into the water four times, very loudly, then fished the bullets out and showed how they had been marked by the gun's barrel. He sniffed the air and growled, "I love the smell of gunpowder in the morning."

"We used that line last year, in a bombing episode!" Mendelsohn said.

Then the producers met with Melanie McMillin, an enthusiastic young hair-and-fibre specialist in a frayed lab coat, who showed them photos of victims' hair and of maggots on corpse flesh.

"Recently," McMillin said, "the investigators wanted me to examine a sheet of broken glass—"

"We did that!" Mendelsohn cried. "We traced the Hackle marks of impact and had our guys use a U.V. light to show how window glass fluoresces on the outside side."

"Also," McMillin said dryly, "the outside is dirtier."

They moved down the hall to an evidence-exam room. Donahue pointed knowingly to a steel coatrack: "This is where you hang garments while the blood on them is drying?"

"No," McMillin said, "it's where I hang my lab coat."

Through another lab's porthole, Donahue spotted a shopping bag on a table. "We're going to test the clothing in that bag for nitrate residue, to see if shots were fired," McMillin explained. "But I can't let you in, because it could contaminate the evidence."

Donahue nodded. "Anytime we want drama on the show, we contaminate the evidence—it gives you great conflict," she said. "Imagine if the defense attorney in this case said, 'So who else handled the clothing? . . . Oh, *really*—two women from Hollywood?' That would not sound good in court."

—*Tad Friend*

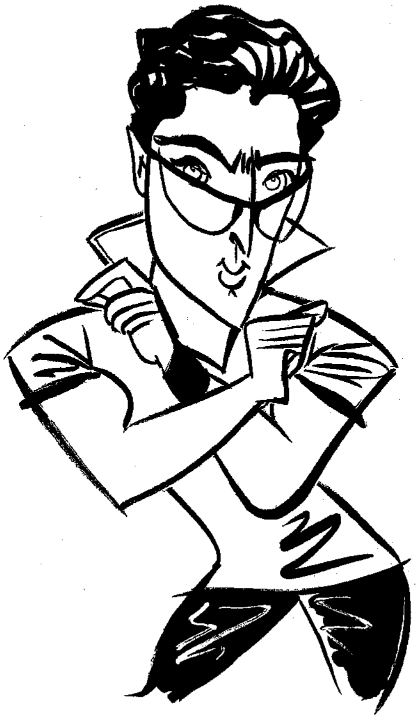
LUCKY MAN DEPT.
BOLLYWOOD NIGHT

The other day, Bharat Jotwani, dressed in black leather and carrying two cell phones, was standing on the fifteen-yard line in the Continental Airlines Arena, in the Meadowlands. He was trying to imagine what the arena, which had been set up for an indoor football game between the New Jersey Gladiators and the New York Dragons, would look like once it was pulsing with lasers and suffused with fake smoke. "Not only wild, they'll go very wild," he said, sounding more hopeful than sure.

Jotwani, who is fifty years old, is a compact man with mournful eyes and a slim mustache. Growing up in Pune, a city eighty miles from Bombay, he wanted to join the Indian Army, but his parents, who had seven daughters and only two sons, wouldn't let him. Instead, they sent him to the United States to study law or medicine. Jotwani never got that far, because almost immediately upon landing in New York he was offered a job in public relations with Air India. In this capacity, he met a lot of big stars and developed an interest—partly professional, partly personal—in Bollywood culture.

Every six months or so, a different group of Indian movie stars tour the United States, and Jotwani, who is now the president and also the primary employee of Poojanka Entertainment, tries his best to book them somewhere in the tristate area. (The firm is named after his two teen-age daughters, Pooja and Priyanka.) This spring's tour—"Heartthrobs"—features three starlets and three young studs, the hottest of whom is Hrithik Roshan, who has appeared in such hits as "Kaho Naa . . . Pyaar Hai" ("Say This Is Love") and "Mission Kashmir." Jotwani described Hrithik as "God's gift to Indian people." Then he corrected himself: "Not Indian, all Asians—Pakistanis, Indians, everybody." Hrithik, he added, is "like how Elvis was." In the poster for "Heartthrobs," Hrithik is shown with generously moussed hair, wearing a tight-fitting silver shirt and gazing penetratingly over the top of a pair of yellow-tinted sunglasses. His fans know that he has an extra thumb on his right hand.

"Heartthrobs," which began its tour in mid-May in Atlanta and will wind up in mid-June in Birmingham, England, is a three-hour extravaganza in the Bollywood fashion. It's all singing and dancing and pyrotechnics, except that the stars don't actually sing the songs. When Hrithik first appears onstage, in a black fringed outfit covered with sparkles, flames erupt on either side of him. Later, he performs "Bumbro," from "Mission Kashmir," with one of the female stars, Kareena Kapoor; in this number, he wears a blue fringed top and red leather pants. For the show's finale, all the stars lip-synch a song from the film "Kabhi Khushi Kabhie Gham" ("Sometimes Happiness, Sometimes Sorrow") and a shower of confetti falls from the ceiling.



Hrithik Roshan

The South Asian entertainment-promotion business is not easy. For the last tour, "Craze 2001," Jotwani had booked the Trump Taj Mahal casino, in Atlantic City, for September 28th. After September 11th, the casino became concerned about security, and Jotwani had to move the concert to the Sovereign Bank Arena, in Trenton. He needed to get word of the change to six thousand ticket holders, and ended up paying out eleven thousand dollars in refunds. As new terrorist warnings for the New York area were issued last week, he maintained that Hrithik fans would not be deterred. "Since the last six months, as far as I'm concerned, there are threats every day," he said.

Money is, in any case, only part of what keeps Jotwani in the business. His two favorite words are "challenge" and "glamour," and often they come together, as in: "It's more challenging, more glamorous." He particularly cherishes his contact with Bollywood luminaries, brief as it may be. "When they come, you are with them, you get to talk to them," he said. "The public is in awe. They're looking at you—'Wow man, he's so lucky, he's with them.' You know, everybody cannot be near them, right?"

Jotwani calls himself "a detail-oriented man," and during the week before "Heartthrobs" he spent hours just sitting in different seats so that he could give advice to ticket buyers, who, he said, were calling him from as far away as Kentucky and Virginia. He had already briefed the laser crew, met with the arena's director of operations, and was going to go check out the hospitality suite. In between, he had to squeeze in his own media appearances, including a television spot out on the football field with a paid program called the "Asian Variety Show." The cameraman appeared, wearing a baseball cap perched atop a black turban. Jotwani spoke to him briefly in Hindi, apparently about one of his rival promoters. Then he fixed his hair. "I look all right?" Jotwani asked the cameraman. He was reassured, as doubtless he expected to be. "You look great," the cameraman said. "You look like a heartthrob."

—*Elizabeth Kolbert*

ANNALS OF NATIONAL SECURITY

MISSED MESSAGES

Why the government didn’t know what it knew.

BY SEYMOUR M. HERSH

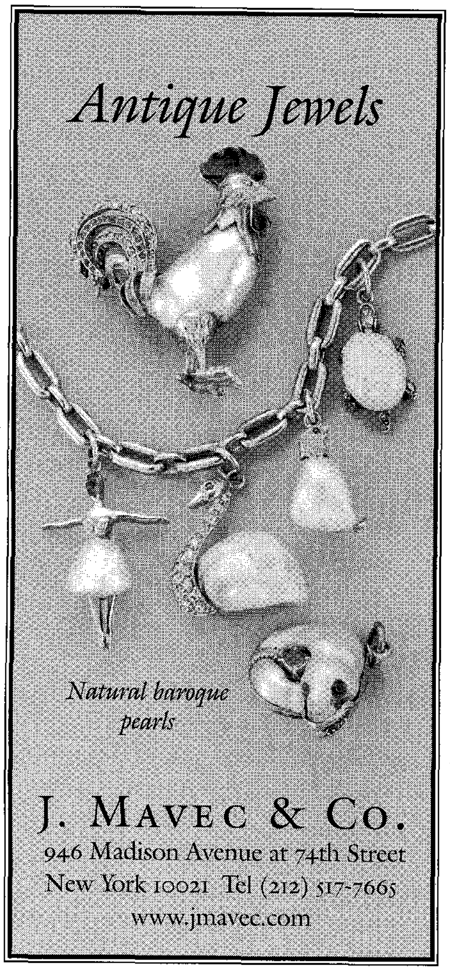
On September 23rd, twelve days after the terror attacks on America, Secretary of State Colin Powell told a Sunday-morning television-news show that the Bush Administration planned to publish a white paper that would prove to the world that Osama bin Laden and his Al Qaeda organization were responsible for the hijackings. “We are putting all of the information that we have together, the intelligence information, the information being generated by the F.B.I. and other law-enforcement agencies,” Powell said. The information that the White House had available, we now know, included a top-secret briefing, given to President Bush on August 6th, documenting what was known about Al Qaeda’s determination to attack American targets. The briefing, prepared by the C.I.A. at the President’s request, was reportedly entitled “Bin Laden Determined to Strike in U.S.” It warned that Al Qaeda hoped to “bring the fight to America.” Despite Powell’s declaration, the Administration never released the white paper. And in October, when the evidence of bin Laden’s involvement was made public, by proxy—by the British Prime Minister, Tony Blair—there was no mention of the pre-attack warnings. In fact, the white paper stated, incorrectly, that no such information had been available before the attacks: “After 11 September we learned that, not long before, Bin Laden had indicated he was about to launch a major attack on America.”

It is now clear that the White House, for its own reasons, chose to keep secret the extent of the intelligence that was available before and immediately after September 11th. In addition to the August briefing, there was a prescient memorandum sent in July to F.B.I. headquarters from the Phoenix office warning of the danger posed by Middle Eastern students at American flight schools (Robert Mueller, the F.B.I. director, did not see the memo until a few days after September 11th), and there was what Condoleezza Rice, the President’s national-security adviser, called “a lot of chatter in the system.” Congressional hearings will almost certainly take place in the next few months, given the conviction of Democratic Party leaders that they finally have a viable political issue.

What the President knew and when he knew it may not be the relevant question, however. No one in Washington seriously contends that the President or any of his senior advisers had any reason to suspect that terrorists were about to fly hijacked airplanes into buildings. A more useful question concerns the degree to which Al Qaeda owed its success to the weakness of the F.B.I. and the agency’s chronic inability to synthesize intelligence reports, draw conclusions, and work with other agencies. These failings, it turns out, were evident long before George Bush took office.

Neither the F.B.I. nor America’s other intelligence agencies have effectively addressed what may be the most important challenge of September 11th: How does an open society deal with warnings of future terrorism? The Al Qaeda terrorists were there to be seen, but there was no system for seeing them.

Several weeks before the attacks, the actor James Woods was in the first-class section of a cross-country flight to Los Angeles. Four of his fellow-passengers were well-dressed men who appeared to be Middle Eastern and were obviously travelling together. “I watch people like a moviemaker,” Woods told me. “As in that scene in ‘Annie Hall’ ”—where Woody Allen and Diane Keaton are sitting on a bench in Central Park speculating on the personal lives of passers-by. “I thought these guys were either terrorists or F.B.I. guys,” Woods went on. “The guys were in synch—dressed alike. They didn’t have a drink and were not talking to the stewardess.



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None of them had a carry-on or a newspaper. Nothing.

"Imagine you're at a live-music event at a small night club and you're standing behind the singer. Everybody is clapping, going along, enjoying the show—and there's four guys paying no attention. What are they doing here?" Woods concluded that the men were "casing" the plane. He said that his concern led him to hang on to his cutlery after lunch. He shared his worries with a flight attendant. "I said, 'I think this plane is going to be hijacked.' I told her, 'I know how serious it is to say this,' and asked to speak to the captain." The flight attendant, too, was concerned. The plane's first officer came over immediately and assured Woods that he and the captain would keep the door to the cockpit locked. The remainder of the trip was bumpy but uneventful, and Woods recalled laughingly telling his agent, who asked about the flight, "Aside from the terrorists and the turbulence, it was fine."

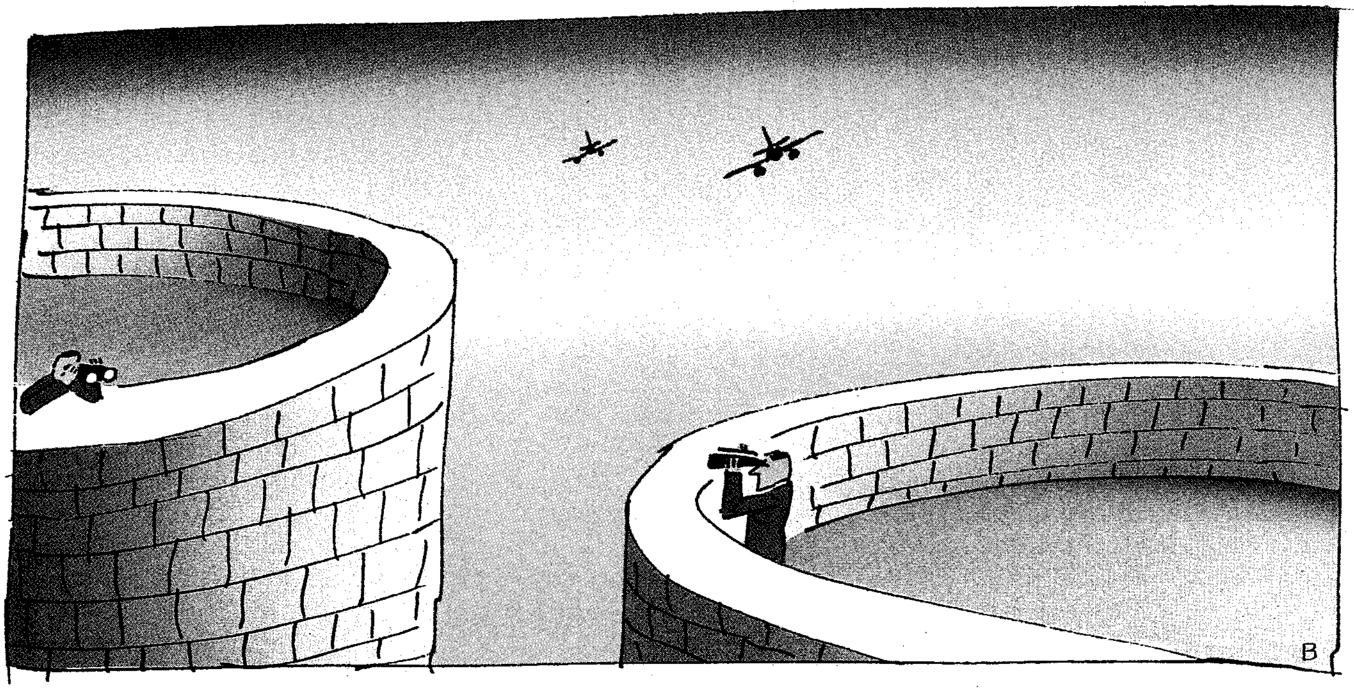
Woods said that the flight attendant told him that she would file a report about the suspicious passengers. If she did, her report probably ended up in a regional Federal Aviation Authority office in Tulsa, or perhaps Dallas, according to Clark Onstad, the former chief counsel of the F.A.A., and disappeared in the bureaucracy. "If you ever walked into one of these offices, you'd see that they have no secretaries," Onstad told me. "These guys are buried under a mountain of paper, and the odds of this"—a report about suspicious passengers—"coming up to a higher level are very low." Even today, eight months after the hijacking, Onstad said, the question "Where would you effectively report something like this so that it would get attention?" has no practical answer.

Throughout the spring and early summer of 2001, intelligence agencies flooded the government with warnings of possible terrorist attacks against American targets, including commercial aircraft, by Al Qaeda and other groups. The warnings were vague but sufficiently alarming to prompt the F.A.A. to issue four information circulars, or I.C.s, to the commercial airline industry between June 22nd and July 31st, warning of possible terrorism. One circular, from late July, noted, according to Condoleezza Rice, that there was "no specific target, no credible info of attack to U.S. civil-aviation interests, but terror groups are known to be planning and training for hijackings, and we ask you therefore to use caution."

For years, however, the airlines had essentially disregarded the F.A.A.'s information circulars. "I.C.s don't require special measures," a former high-level F.A.A. official told me. "To get the airlines to react, you have to send a Security Directive"—a high-priority message that, under F.A.A. regulations, mandates an immediate response. Without a directive, the American airline industry was operating in a business-as-usual manner when Woods noticed the suspicious passengers on his flight.

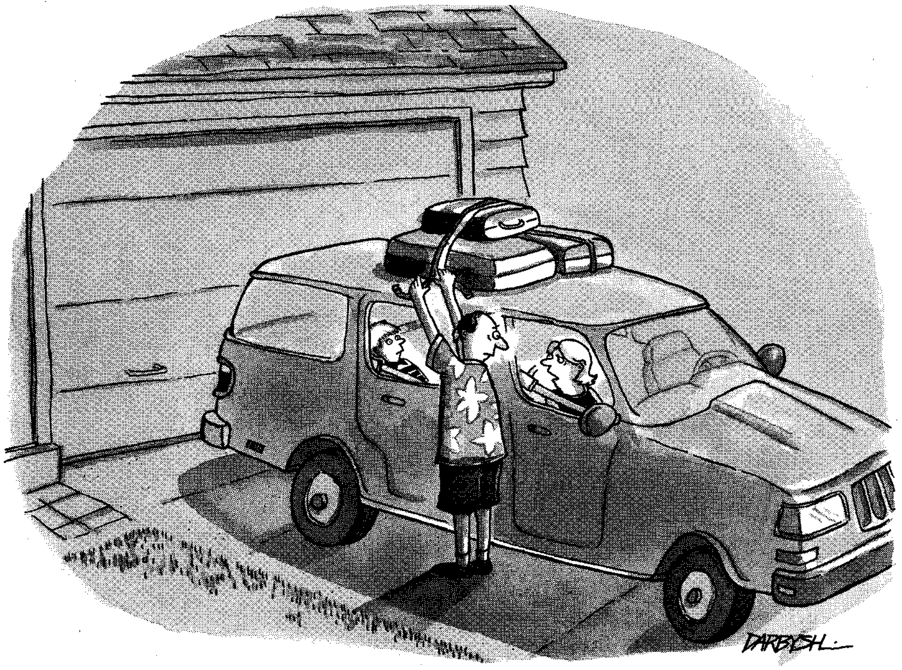
On the evening of September 11th, Woods telephoned the Los Angeles office of the F.B.I. and told a special agent about the encounter. In an interview on Fox Television in February, Woods described being awakened at six-forty-five the next morning by a telephone call from the agent. "I said, 'I'll get ready and I'll come down to the federal building,' " Woods recounted. "He said, 'That's O.K. We're outside your house.' " By then, Woods told me, he was no longer certain of the date of his trip. "The first thing I said is 'I'm not sure which flight it was on.' " But he had a vivid memory of the men's faces. When he was shown photographs, Woods thought he recognized two of the hijackers—Hamza Alghamdi, who flew on United Airlines Flight 175, which struck the south tower of the World Trade Center, and Khalid Almihdhar, who was on American Airlines Flight 77, which struck the Pentagon. One of the men stood out because of his "pointy hair," Woods told me, and the other looked like one of the characters in the movie version of John le Carré's "The Little Drummer Girl."

A senior F.B.I. official told me that the



To what degree does Al Qaeda owe its success to the F.B.I.'s inability to synthesize data and work with other agencies?

GUY BILLOUT



"Wait a minute—we don't have a house in the Hamptons."

• •

bureau had subsequently investigated Woods's story but had not been able to find evidence of the hijackers on the flight Woods thought he had taken. "We don't know for sure," the official said.

Woods's flight was not the only one the F.B.I. looked into after September 11th. The bureau found other evidence that the terrorists from the four different planes had flown together earlier, in various combinations, to "check out flights," as one agent put it. The F.B.I. now thinks that the hijackers flew on perhaps a dozen flights, together and separately, in the summer of 2001.

The hijackers' decision to risk flying together calls into question much of the conventional wisdom about September 11th. The F.B.I. and the C.I.A. have repeatedly characterized the Al Qaeda terrorists as brilliant professionals—what I. C. Smith, who retired in 1998, after a twenty-five-year career at the F.B.I., much of it in counterintelligence, calls "the superman scenario." In a rare public appearance, at Duke University in April, James Pavitt, the C.I.A.'s deputy director for operations—the agency's top spymaster—said of Al Qaeda:

> The terror cells that we're going up against are typically small and all terrorist personnel . . . were carefully screened. The number of personnel who know vital information, targets, timing, the exact methods to be used had to be smaller still. . . . Against that degree of control, that kind of compartmentation, that depth of discipline and fanaticism, I personally doubt—and I draw again upon my thirty years of experience in this business—that anything short of one of the knowledgeable inner-circle personnel or hijackers turning himself in to us would have given us sufficient foreknowledge to have prevented the horrendous slaughter that took place on the eleventh.

The point of operating in cells is to insure that if one person is caught he can expose only those in his own cell, because he knows nothing of the others. The entire operation is not put at risk. The Al Qaeda terrorists seem to have violated a fundamental rule of clandestine operations. Far from working independently and maintaining rigid communications security, the terrorists, as late as last summer, apparently mingled openly and had not yet decided which flights to target. The planning for September 11th appears to have been far more ad hoc than was at first assumed.

A senior F.B.I. official insisted to me that the September 11th attacks were "carefully orchestrated and well planned," but he agreed that serious and potentially fatal errors were made by the terrorists. Another official said, "We early on thought that people on flight one did not know anything about flights two, three, and four, but we did find that there was cross-pollination in travel and coördination. If they're so good, why did they intermingle?" A third F.B.I. official said, "Are they ten feet tall? They're not."

The fact that the terrorists managed to bring down the World Trade Center may simply mean that seizing an airplane was easier than the American public has been led to believe. The real message of missed opportunities like the Woods flight may be that, even at a time when America's intelligence agencies had raised an alarm, chatter remained chatter—diffuse noise. There were no mechanisms to either dispose of leads, warnings, and suspicious incidents or effectively translate them into a plan for preventing Al Qaeda from attacking.

By 1990, in the wake of the terrorist bombing of Pan Am Flight 103, congressional committees had concluded that the F.A.A. needed more immediate access to current intelligence, and urged that an F.A.A. security official be assigned to the relevant offices in the C.I.A., the F.B.I., and the State Department. Leo Boivin, who was the agency's primary security analyst at the time, told me, "I started the program. Getting into the C.I.A. and State was no problem, but the F.B.I. effectively said no—that it wasn't going to happen. The bureau didn't want anybody in there, and we couldn't fight the bureau." In 1996, after the crash of T.W.A. Flight 800, a commission directed by Vice-President Al Gore also called for closer liaison. This time, according to Boivin, who retired last August, the F.B.I. refused to give the F.A.A. security officer a building pass that would permit unfettered access to F.B.I. headquarters. "The problem with the intelligence community is that you didn't know what you didn't know," Boivin said. " 'If there is a problem,' the bureau would say, 'we'll tell you about it.' " The difficulties continued after September 11th. Boivin said that the F.B.I. sought to get rid of the F.A.A.'s liaison man at headquarters, because, in Boivin's words, "he was seen as too pushy about trying to get information." (An F.B.I. spokesman, when asked for comment, said, "Both before September 11th and after September 11th, the bureau shared information with our law-enforcement partners to the fullest extent possible.")

The airlines, always eager to trim operating expenses, successfully lobbied against many of the safety provisions recommended by the Gore commission, such as more stringent security checks on airline employees and tighter screening of passenger baggage. William Webster, the former F.B.I. director, served as the airlines' lobbyist. "The airlines never wanted to spend a lot of money on security," said David Plavin, who was on the Gore commission and is the president of Airports Council International, the lobbying arm of the nation's more than five hundred commercial airports. "They were always concerned that the government would stick them with the bill." Much of that worry, Plavin told me, was alleviated after September 11th with the passage of legislation creating the Transportation Security Administration, which puts the responsibility for security on the federal government, but the new legislation won't solve the most serious problem: bureaucratic infighting. "More than half a dozen federal agencies are involved in airline travel, and their inability to work with each other is notorious," Plavin said. "Protecting their own turf is what matters."

In the late nineteen-nineties, the C.I.A. obtained reliable information indicating that an Al Qaeda network based in northern Germany had penetrated airport security in Amsterdam and was planning to attack American passenger planes by planting bombs in the cargo, a former security official told me. The intelligence was good enough to warrant the dissemination of an F.A.A. Security Directive, and the C.I.A., working with German police, planned a series of successful preëmptive raids. "The Germans rousted a lot of people," the former official said. The F.A.A. and the C.I.A. worked closely together and the incident was kept secret. "While the threat was on, the F.A.A. was getting two or three C.I.A. briefings a day," the former official said. In contrast, in operations in which the F.B.I. took the lead, "the F.A.A. got nothing. The F.B.I. people said, 'If there is a threat, we'll tell you, but we're not going to tell you what's going on in the investigations.' The F.A.A. told them that it had much more information about threats in Hamburg and Beirut than in Detroit, and they said, 'That's the way it is.' They'd come and give a dog-and-pony show."

Long before September 11th, the American intelligence community had a significant amount of information about specific terrorist threats to commercial airline travel in America, including the possibility that a plane could be used as a weapon. In 1994, an Algerian terrorist group hijacked an Air France airliner and threatened to crash it into the Eiffel Tower. In 1995, police in Manila broke up a terrorist operation that was planning to plant bombs with timing devices on as many as twelve American airliners. They also found information that led to the arrest of Ramzi Ahmed Yousef, who directed the 1993 bombing of the World Trade Center. Abdul Hakim Murad, one of Yousef's collaborators, told the Philippine police and, later, U.S. intelligence officers that he had earned his pilot's license in an American flight school and had been planning to seize a small plane, fill it with explosives, and fly it into C.I.A. headquarters. Murad confessed, according to an account published last December in the Washington *Post*, that he had gone to the American flight school "in preparation for a suicide mission." In 1996, the F.B.I. director, Louis Freeh, asked officials in Qatar—a nation suspected of harboring Al Qaeda terrorists—for help in apprehending another alleged accomplice of Yousef, Khalid Shaikh Mohammed, who was then believed to be in Qatar. One of Freeh's diplomatic notes stated that Mohammed was involved in a conspiracy to "bomb U.S. airliners" and was also believed to be "in the process of manufacturing an explosive device."

In late December of 1999, a group of Al Qaeda terrorists armed with knives hijacked an Indian airliner and diverted it to Kandahar, Afghanistan. The hijackers maintained control of the passengers and crew by cutting the throat of

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a young passenger and letting the victim bleed to death, a tactic that the September 11th terrorists are believed to have used on flight attendants. (Shortly after the Indian hijacking, the F.B.I. opened a liaison office in New Delhi, and has since worked closely with Indian security officials.) The F.A.A., in its annual report for the year 2000, warned that bin Laden and Al Qaeda posed "a significant threat to civil aviation." The F.A.A. had earlier noted, according to the *Times*, that there was a specific report from an exiled Islamic leader in Britain alleging that bin Laden was planning to "bring down an airliner, or hijack an airliner to humiliate the United States."

The attendance of potential terrorists at flight-training schools in America is not a new phenomenon, either. As early as 1975, according to an unpublished Senate Foreign Relations Committee document, Raymond Winall, then the F.B.I.'s assistant director for intelligence, revealed that a suspected member of Black September, the Palestinian terrorist group responsible for the deaths of eleven Israeli athletes at the 1972 Olympics in Munich, had explained his presence in the United States by telling the F.B.I. that he had been admitted for pilot training—the same explanation for the presence here of a number of the September 11th terrorists. The suspect was indicted but fled the country before he could be arraigned. Since then, according to Bill Carroll, a former district director for the Immigration and Naturalization Service, thousands of young Middle Easterners have obtained visas to enroll in flight-instruction programs.

In recent interviews, three senior F.B.I. officials in charge of responding to terrorism threats did not defend the bureau's past performance, and acknowledged that many of the long-standing complaints had merit. But they insisted that, since September 11th, many things had been done right. The F.B.I. had invested enormous resources in tracking the terrorists' travel activities, and much progress had been made in disrupting the international flow of money to Al Qaeda. The officials admitted that there are still questions about the reliability of some of the information that was collected in the days immediately after September 11th. One unresolved mystery is how many of the nineteen hijackers understood that the mission called for the immolation of all aboard.

The officials maintained that they have correctly established the true identity of all nineteen, by consulting records and going back to their countries of origin. There are, however, lingering questions about at least eight of them. For example, the F.B.I. has identified one of the hijackers aboard United Airlines Flight 77, which crashed into the Pentagon, as Nawaf Alhazmi. A Maryland motel he had checked into under this name had a record of a New York driver's license number and a Manhattan address he had given. But the address turned out to be a hotel, which reported that it had no record of him. And the New York Department of Motor Vehicles said that the number was invalid, and that it had never issued a license to anyone named Nawaf Alhazmi. Similarly, Waleed Alshehri, who was aboard American Airlines Flight 11, was identified by the F.B.I. as a college graduate from Florida whose father was a Saudi diplomat. And yet, last fall, the diplomat told a Saudi Arabian newspaper that his son was still alive and working as a pilot for Saudi Arabian Airlines.

The prevalence of identity theft has also complicated matters. There are an estimated seven hundred and fifty thousand cases of stolen identity in the United States every year, according to Rob Douglas, a leading privacy expert. Saudi newspapers eventually reported that at least four men with the same names as those listed by the F.B.I. as hijackers had been victims of passport theft. A hijacker identified as Abdulaziz Alomari, who also was aboard Flight 11, was reported by the *Rocky Mountain News* to have the same name as a graduate of the University of Colorado, a man who did not resemble a photograph of the hijacker. That Alomari had been stopped by the Denver police several times for minor offenses while attending college and had given three different birth dates. One of the dates matches the birth date used by the hijacker. Investigators subsequently learned that in 1995 the Colorado student had reported a theft in his apartment; among the items stolen was his passport.

Another hijacker, who used the name Saeed Alghamdi and was aboard Flight 93, was reported last fall by *Newsday* to have taken the Social Security number of a Vermont woman who had been dead since 1965. The name is a common one in Saudi Arabia. At least four other men with that name have shown up on records at the flight school in Florida where Alghamdi was said by the F.B.I. to have trained. The school reported that it had trained more than sixteen hundred students with the first name Saeed and more than two hundred with the surname Alghamdi. Social Security officials also said that six of the nineteen hijackers were using identity cards belonging to other people.

In April, police in Milan raided the

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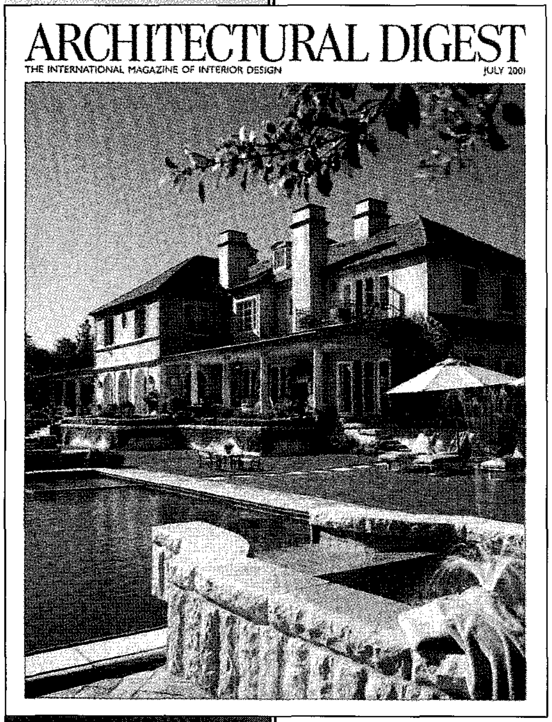

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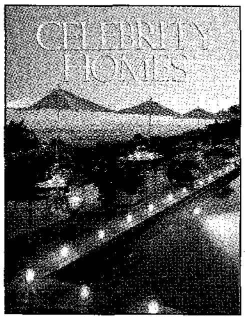

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ARCHITECTURAL DIGEST

apartment of Essid Sami Ben Khemais, the alleged head of an extremist group based in Italy that has been linked to Al Qaeda. A prosecutor's affidavit, the Baltimore *Sun* reported, described what was found: a cache of forged Tunisian and Yemeni passports, Italian identity cards, and photocopies of German driver's licenses. The prosecutor wrote, "One of the most essential illegal activities of the group is the procurement and use of false documents . . . to guarantee a new identity to the 'brothers' who must hide or escape investigation." The prosecutor further said that the police had recorded telephone conversations in which Khemais discussed with Al Qaeda members the mechanics of falsifying documents.

The complaints about the F.B.I. are well known to the Senate Judiciary Committee, whose chairman, Patrick Leahy, of Vermont, has been urging extensive reform of the bureau for years. "These are not problems of money," Leahy said last July, during confirmation hearings on the appointment of Robert Mueller as the new F.B.I. director. "We have poured a lot of money into the F.B.I. It is a management problem."

The F.B.I.'s computer systems have been in disarray for more than a decade, making it difficult, if not impossible, for analysts and agents to correlate and interpret intelligence. The F.B.I.'s technological weakness also hinders its ability to solve crimes. In March, for example, Leahy's committee was told that photographs of the nineteen suspected hijackers could not be sent electronically in the days immediately after September 11th to the F.B.I. office in Tampa, Florida, because the F.B.I.'s computer systems weren't compatible. Robert Chiradio, the special agent in charge, explained at a hearing that "we don't have the ability to put any scanning or multimedia" into F.B.I. computer systems. The photographs had "to be put on a CD-ROM and mailed to me."

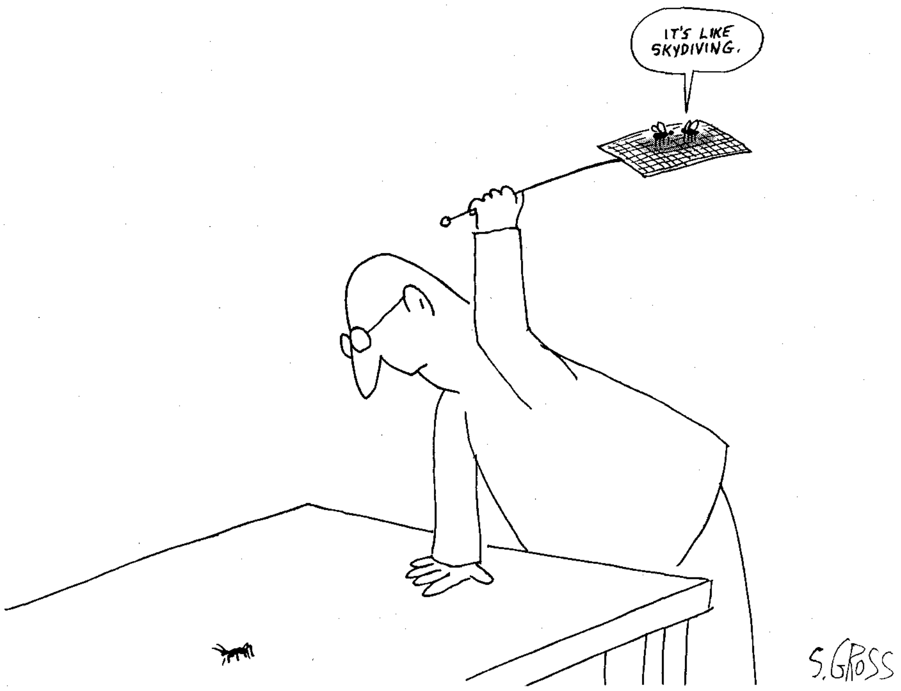
Part of the problem, former F.B.I. agents have told me, is the long-standing practice by the F.B.I. leadership of "reprogramming" funds intended for computer upgrading. I. C. Smith, who was in charge of the F.B.I.'s budget for national-security programs, told me that his department was "constantly raiding the technical programs" to make up for shortfalls in other areas—such as, in one case, the travel budget.

Mueller, who had been on the job for only a week before September 11th, acknowledged in a speech in April that many of the desktop computers at the F.B.I. were discards from other federal agencies that "we take as upgrades." He went on, "We have systems that cannot talk with other bureau systems, much less with other federal agencies. We're working to create a database . . . that we can use to share information and intelligence with the outside world. We hope to test it later next year"—that is, sometime in 2003.

Clearly, the agents in the field and their superiors at F.B.I. headquarters did not have the optimal tools to cope with the complex world of Middle Eastern terrorism—and the outpouring of intelligence data and warnings about activities inside the United States. (They were not alone. The C.I.A. and other intelligence agencies also contributed to the failure that led to September 11th.) The F.B.I. also found it extremely difficult to field undercover operatives inside the Islamic fundamentalist movement. The situation remains the same today, intelligence officials told me. "They're incapable of it," one former intelligence official said, referring to the F.B.I.'s lack of experience in covert operations. "This is much scarier than the C.I.A.'s inability to penetrate overseas. We don't have eyes and ears in the Muslim communities. We're naked here."

In a recent conversation, a senior F.B.I. official acknowledged that there had been "no breakthrough" inside the government, in terms of establishing how the September 11th suicide teams were organized and how they operated. America's war in Afghanistan, despite success in driving Al Qaeda from its bases there, has yet to produce significant information about the planning and execution of the attacks. U.S. forces are known to have captured thousands of pages of documents and computer hard drives from Al Qaeda redoubts, but so far none of this material—which remains highly classified—has enabled the Justice Department to broaden its understanding of how the attack occurred, or even to bring an indictment of a conspirator. The government's only criminal proceeding filed thus far is against Zacarias Moussaoui, a French citizen who was already in jail on September 11th, on immigration charges. "It's kind of obvious that we haven't wrapped anything up," a C.I.A. consultant told me.

One senior F.B.I. official argued, however, that the intensive American bombing campaign in Afghanistan and the dramatically improved coördination with international police forces and intelligence agencies have led to a serious degradation of Al Qaeda's com-



mand and control, and, he said, "the over-all structure of Al Qaeda has been disrupted." Referring to the heavy satellite monitoring of the many training camps operated by Al Qaeda and other terrorist groups in Afghanistan, he said, "For years, we watched the graduating classes every year at the University of Terrorism." What's left, he went on, are "those fleas—the graduates of the training classes who are spread out in the world. We are going to have problems with them for years to come. Could there be a flea who strikes this week in Kansas City? Absolutely."

In Senate testimony in May, Robert Mueller emphasized how difficult it would have been to thwart the September 11th attacks, noting that fifty million people entered and left the United States in August, 2001. "The terrorists took advantage of America's strengths and used them against us," he said. "And as long as we continue to treasure our freedoms we always will run some risk of future attacks."

"These guys were not superhuman," I. C. Smith noted, "but they were playing in a system that was more inept than they were. If you go back to the aircraft hijackings of the early nineteen-seventies, I can't recall a single instance where we caught a guy"—in advance—"who really intended to hijack a plane." But men like Mueller, Smith added, "can't afford to say that the terrorists stumbled through this."

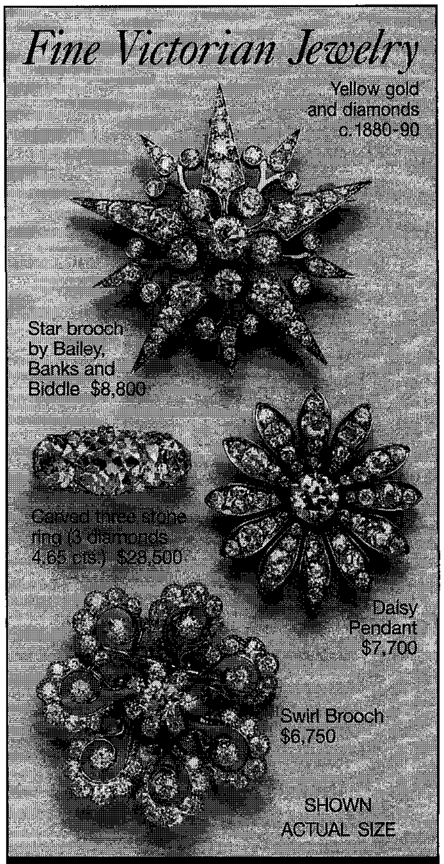
Mueller has one of the most difficult jobs in government today. He is trying to reorganize a bureaucracy that has resisted changes—and outsiders—for decades. He does not praise the old days, and the old ways of doing business, in his public statements. "We must refocus our mission and our priorities," he told the Senate Judiciary Committee in May. "We must improve how we hire, manage, and train our workforce, collaborate with others, and manage, analyze, share, and protect our information." He added, "I am more impatient than most, but we must do these things right, not simply fast."

Mueller's insistence on centralizing decision-making and control of counterterrorism operations at F.B.I. headquarters has provoked discord in some of the F.B.I.'s fifty-six bureaus across the nation. Senior officers with specialized expertise were reassigned to counterterrorism duty after September 11th, and many still find their new jobs bewildering.

Increasingly, the divisions are becoming public. Last week, a letter of complaint sent to the House and Senate intelligence committees by the F.B.I.'s general counsel in Minneapolis was leaked to the press. It accused F.B.I. headquarters of obstructing the local inquiry into Zacarias Moussaoui and accused Mueller personally of misrepresenting the bureau's handling of the case. Mueller quickly announced that he had referred the matter to the Justice Department for investigation. A Senate aide told me that Mueller's willingness to air the problems—even at the risk of adverse publicity—had won him few friends inside the Bush Administration. "He's had his hand slapped by the Justice Department," the official said, "and he's having problems with the White House."

Mueller does have the support, thus far, of the often skeptical Senate Judiciary Committee. The committee, under Senator Leahy, began extensive oversight hearings into the F.B.I. last year—the first comprehensive hearings in two decades. "He inherited a mess," Leahy said. "The F.B.I. has improved since the days of J. Edgar Hoover. It doesn't go around blackmailing members of Congress anymore. But it still has a 'We don't make mistakes or admit mistakes' culture." Mueller seems to be committed to changing that attitude, Leahy told me. "I have confidence in him, and it will continue as long as we see a bureau that really wants to correct its mistakes. Mueller's best defense—and his best offense—is to be as forthcoming with Congress as possible." The Senator added, "White Houses come and go, but he has a ten-year tenure."

Since the hijackings, the F.B.I. and the C.I.A. have gone to great lengths to improve coöperation, and C.I.A. personnel are assigned to F.B.I. offices. In some basic ways, however, the F.B.I. still doesn't work. The bureau, one of Mueller's aides said, is undergoing an enormous and painful change in its day-to-day approach to investigations. "The mission now is not just to put handcuffs on people and throw them into jail but to stop acts of terrorism in the future. A lot of people here are not prepared to radically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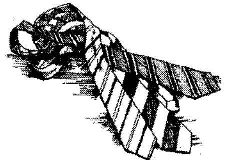
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change their way of doing business, and it's frustrating for many agents, with their black-and-white way of looking at the world. The F.B.I.'s priority now is to get information to prevent the next event—even if it means we lose the case." The transition will lead to many forced early retirements. "There hasn't been time to build up a cadre of people with the right skills," the aide said. One inevitable problem is that the most significant of Mueller's changes—such as the recruitment and hiring of experts in foreign languages, area studies, and computer technology—will not pay dividends for years.

A longtime clandestine C.I.A. operative was skeptical about the rival agency's ability to transform itself. "They're cops," he said of the F.B.I. agents. "They spent their careers trying to catch bank robbers while we spent ours trying to rob banks."

The Administration did not respond passively to the recent wave of media reports of warnings gone unheeded. It went on the offensive. Vice-President Dick Cheney warned against "incendiary rhetoric," and said that the criticism from Democrats about the missed messages was "thoroughly irresponsible of national leaders in a time of war." Other Cabinet members issued dire public warnings of increased terrorism threats—based not on specific information but on more "chatter," in various corners of the Islamic world. In earlier interviews with me, senior F.B.I. counterterrorism officials had made a point of criticizing such vague warnings. "Is there some C.Y.A."—cover your ass—"involved when officials talk about threats to power supplies, or banks, or malls?" one senior F.B.I. official asked. "Of course there is."

"Puffing up the threat because of a political interest is a disservice," the official added. When such threats are unfulfilled, the result is that "the country lowers its guard. And that kind of flippancy is what we don't need now. The American people are going back to sleep."

Another F.B.I. official depicted the question of when to warn the public as a "lose-lose" situation. "Say we get a report that three Al Qaeda guys are driving up from Mexico to blow up an unspecified mall in Dallas," the official said. "What do you want to be told?" He added, "We know the power of the people. Do we want you calling us if your neighbor is turning in to his driveway at two in the morning?" The bureau responded to three hundred calls about suspicious packages between January 1st and September 10th of 2001. After September 11th, the official said, "we received fifty-four thousand calls and physically responded to fourteen thousand of them." Even now, according to another official, scores of tips arrive every day from overseas, many of them relayed by C.I.A. sources that are known to pay for such information. "And the C.I.A. is happy to forward them to us," he noted. "Then it's not the C.I.A.'s problem."

Stories of supposed terrorist sightings have also become common inside the airline industry—a part of its post-September 11th folklore. One widely repeated tale involves a stewardess who flew with a man dressed as a captain—he had hitched a ride, as crew members often do—whom she later recognized as Mohammed Atta. Many in the industry, it seems, know someone who knows someone who saw one or another of the September 11th terrorists in captains' uniforms in cockpit jumpseats.

There also has been a series of jarring alerts from federal health agencies and the Office of Homeland Security depicting the far-reaching threat posed by biological warfare or the possible use of fissile materials by Al Qaeda. One public-health official who has participated in Homeland Security discussions described the group as being overwhelmed by the potential threat to America's water supply, electrical grids, oil depots, and even the wholesale processing of milk. "Where do we start?" he said. "So many threats. We're like deer in the headlights."

"Traditionally, when Americans have had a war, they go and find the enemy, defeat it on the battlefield, and come home to replant," a senior F.B.I. official said. The war against terrorism is a long-term struggle and has no borders. "We need maturity when it comes to protecting our society," the official went on. "We shouldn't profoundly change our system, but we need a balance. Democracy is a messy business." Meanwhile, the terrorists won't go away. Another senior F.B.I. official said, "They'd like nothing better than to regroup and come back." ♦

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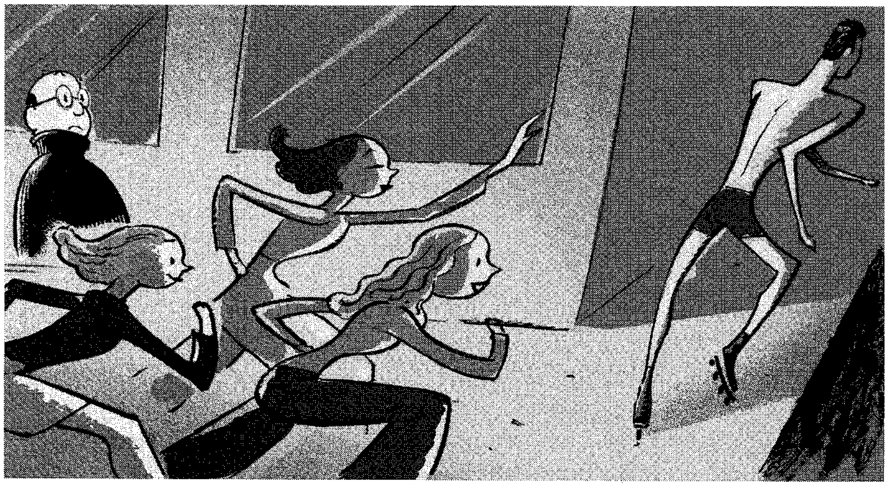
SHOUTS & MURMURS

J.F.K., JR., AND ME: AN INTIMATE PORTRAIT

BY CHRISTOPHER BUCKLEY

I first met John Kennedy—it must have been sometime in the nineties. He was walking up Madison Avenue, naked from the waist up, wearing tight cutoff jeans that nicely emphasized his firm butt muscles. He was being followed by about five hundred women, including Daryl Hannah, the wife of the Prime Minister of Canada, and a striking sixteen-year-old girl with a foreign accent who would turn out to be Penélope Cruz, the actress.

What struck me at the time was John's coolness. Most people who were being followed up Madison Avenue by a crowd of this size, grabbing at them, asking them for autographs, sex, whatever, would find it challenging. Every time John walked into a store, the crowd would follow and the fire marshal would have to be called, along with the Federal Emergency Management Agency. But John would just smile and shrug, as if to say, "Aren't Americans, like, the stupidest human beings on the face of the planet?" You could only smile back at him, as if to say, "Totally!"



ERIC PALMA

It was when he was escaping out the service entrance of Dolce & Gabbana that we actually met. I had nearly been suffocated and crushed to death trying to get out the store's front door. I turned and ran down a side street—right into John. I knocked him over.

I was lying there on top of his firm, muscular, perfectly groomed chest, thinking, Oh, my God, here I am lying on top of "America's Prince." What do you say in a situation like this? All I could think of was "Sorry." It sounded so hollow and dumb.

I was expecting him to call me names and be really angry, but no. He very politely told me that he couldn't breathe, and asked if I would please get off him. Of course I did.

We exchanged some small talk about Dolce & Gabbana's new fall line. I couldn't believe how nice he was being. Other "Sexiest Men Alive" might have been quite rude, or ordered their bodyguards to shoot me, or whatever. But not John. I felt that we would have had a much longer conversation, except that by now FEMA helicopters were swarming overhead, dropping crowd-dispersal gas, and it was hard for us to hear each other. Before he sprinted off, he said—and I remember his words exactly—"Good to see you." I'll never forget the sight of his lean, glistening calves as he ran down the street, knocking over garbage cans and a Chinese deliveryman. From the way the Chinese guy swore, I don't think he had any idea who had just caused him to drop his hot-and-sour soup all over the sidewalk.

The next time John and I met was in Central Park. Actually, we didn't technically "meet." But I knew that he liked to have arguments with his various girlfriends in the Park, where there were fewer photographers, and I was hopeful that I might get to witness a "Hunk Dustup." Not because I like it when young and attractive people fight, but when John and Daryl or whoever fight it's history. I've always been a fan of history, and this would be one way to experience it.

As luck would have it, one day, after I had been keeping a vigil for fifty-six straight days in a deerstand halfway up a tree, I saw John and a striking blond woman who seemed to be well over six feet tall come walking up the path. It was obvious that they were not getting along, since the woman kept hitting John with her backpack. At first, John seemed to treat it as if it were a joke, but after twenty or so blows his attitude seemed to change. I could see that he didn't like it.

"Hey, cut it out!" he yelled. The forceful way he said it reminded me of how his father, the late President Kennedy, would take command of a situation, such as when he ordered the Navy to blockade Cuba.

But the woman continued to flail away at the "Young Prince" with her backpack. Finally, John picked her up and, with her screaming and yelling, carried her over and dumped her into the duck pond. She came up sputtering, covered with mud and guck, and began to call him all sorts of names. At this point, John sort of shrugged and walked off. Clearly, he sensed that this woman needed to chill out. It wasn't until she wiped the gunk and muck off her face that I got a good look at her and saw that it was Princess Diana, who at the time was getting a divorce from Prince Charles. I can't help thinking that if I had intervened somehow—maybe just dropped out of the tree and said to them, "Hey, hey! It's too nice a day to argue!," or something—they might have got over whatever problem they were having and ended up with each other. It's not that I blame myself. We weren't that close, really. But maybe I should have tried, and now it's too late. ♦

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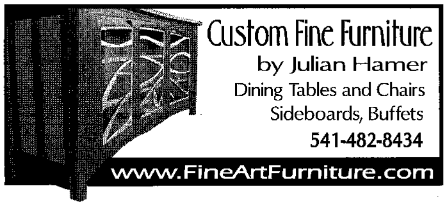

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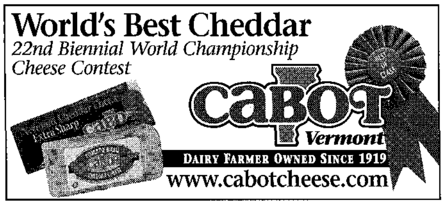

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LIFE AND LETTERS

FROM RACE TO CHASE

Yale's Stephen L. Carter writes a thriller.

BY DAVID OWEN

When Stephen Carter, who is the William Nelson Cromwell Professor at Yale Law School, was in eighth grade, in 1967, his history teacher, Mrs. Ahlquist, made a comment that helped to change his life. "She said, 'You're pretty smart,' " Carter told me recently. "I had never thought of myself that way before. I had always been an ordinary student, and I had not stood out in class, academically."

Carter is black; the public junior high school he attended, in Washington, D.C., was predominantly white. When he entered the school, in seventh grade, his mother was told that he would not be able to continue taking Spanish, because the foreign-language program was reserved for students from a different elementary school. "That particular elementary school happened to be white, while the one I had attended happened to be black," Carter said. Like the other black students, he was given vocational training instead: woodshop, print shop, typing. "There's nothing wrong with shop," he went on, "and typing has been a useful skill for me. But those were the only possibilities." The following year, however, Carter was allowed to take Latin and algebra, and suddenly he began to excel. Along with Mrs. Ahlquist, he began to believe that he might be pretty smart.

Academic achievement brought Carter both satisfaction and frustration. A couple of years later, at the mostly white high school he attended, in Ithaca, New York, he was usually the only black student in the courses he took, and that fact alone made his teachers and classmates treat him as exceptional: even his ordinary efforts won him a sort of astonished admiration. But Carter yearned to be accepted as something more than the school's "best black." He worked harder still, and he made sure that his good grades and high test scores were not a secret. "Eighth grade through twelfth grade, I was pretty unbearable," he told me. He went on to Stanford, where he majored in history and served as the managing editor of the student newspaper, and then to Yale Law School, where he was an editor of the *Yale Law Journal.* He clerked for both a federal appeals-court judge and the United States Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall. He has taught at Yale since 1982.

At Yale, Carter was exceptional from the start. After just three years on the faculty, he became the school's first tenured black professor. He has written seven very readable nonfiction books on a variety of legal, political, social, moral, and religious themes, and those books have given him a popular following that extends far beyond New Haven. His religious views, especially, have distinguished him from his colleagues: his personal faith, which can be generally characterized as evangelical Christianity, is of a variety not often found within the faculties of large universities, particularly in the Northeast. He contributes a regular column to *Christianity Today;* recently, his topic was the "unintentional biblical message" of the movie "A Beautiful Mind."

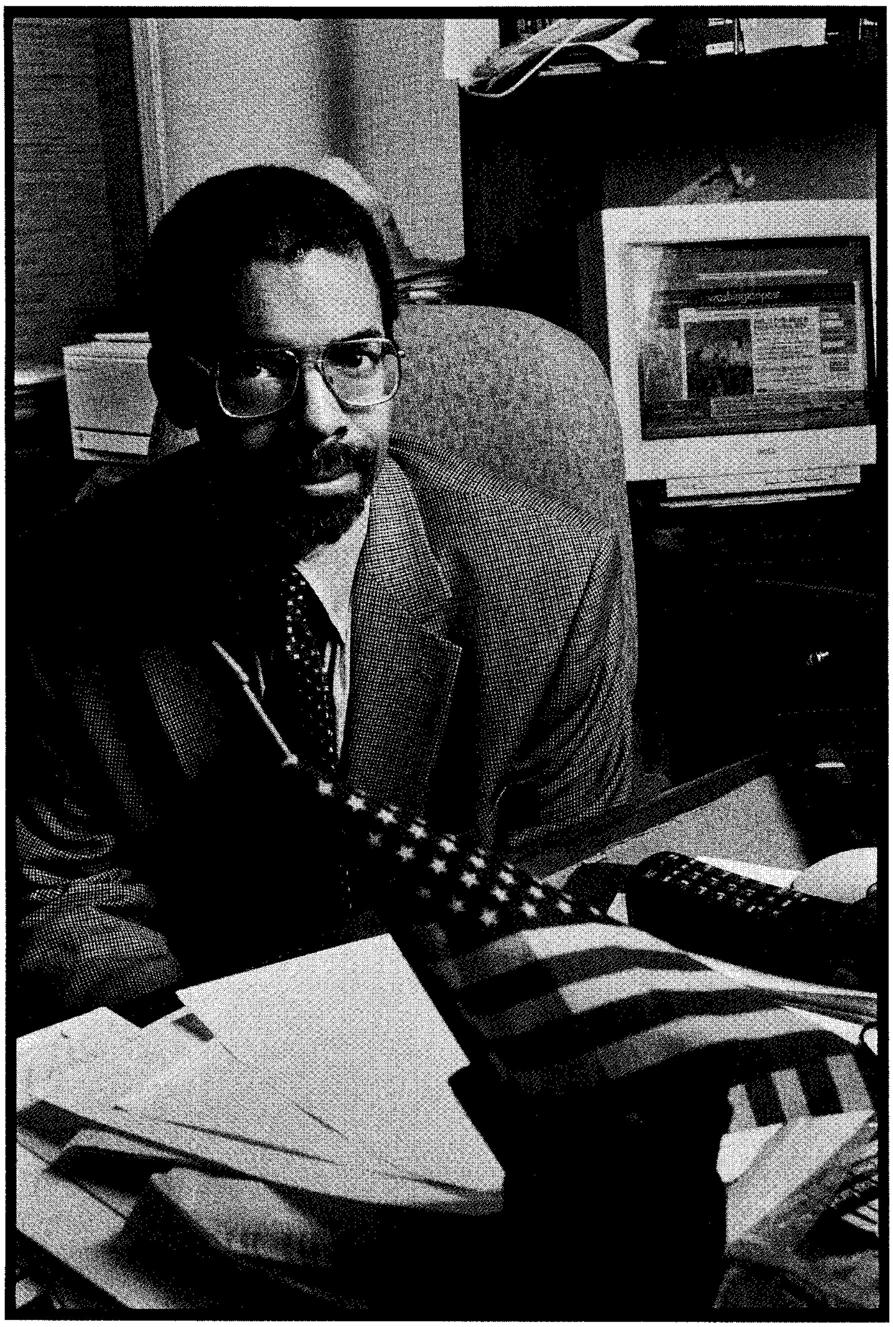
On June 2nd, Carter is distinguishing himself yet again: Knopf is publishing his first novel, "The Emperor of Ocean Park." Carter's agent, Lynn Nesbit, submitted the manuscript to about eight publishers a little more than a year ago. Within days, she received three preëmptive offers—big bids that were meant to tempt her into ending the auction early. Knopf eventually prevailed, with an offer of four million dollars for this novel and one more (which Carter is writing now). The deal made Carter one of the highest-paid novice fiction writers ever—an achievement that prompted a colleague to refer to him, privately and with mild derision, as "Stephen Carter, Superstar."

Carter's emergence as a popular novelist has surprised people who knew him only as a professor and a serious scholar. As Carter sees things, though, his new

MAGNUM

book fits right in. He has dreamed of being a published novelist since he was a young boy, when he would fill spiral notebooks with science-fiction stories. And he has managed to give the book—which is both a conventional thriller and an account of a large, complicated, prosperous black family—a number of very Carter-like touches. For example, the narrator manages, between cliffhangers, to slip in a few pointed observations on African-American culture, the conundrum of affirmative action, and the nature of God. And, in more than six hundred and fifty pages of action, dialogue, and narrative exposition, none of the characters (including numerous armed-and-dangerous bad guys) ever take the Lord's name in vain.

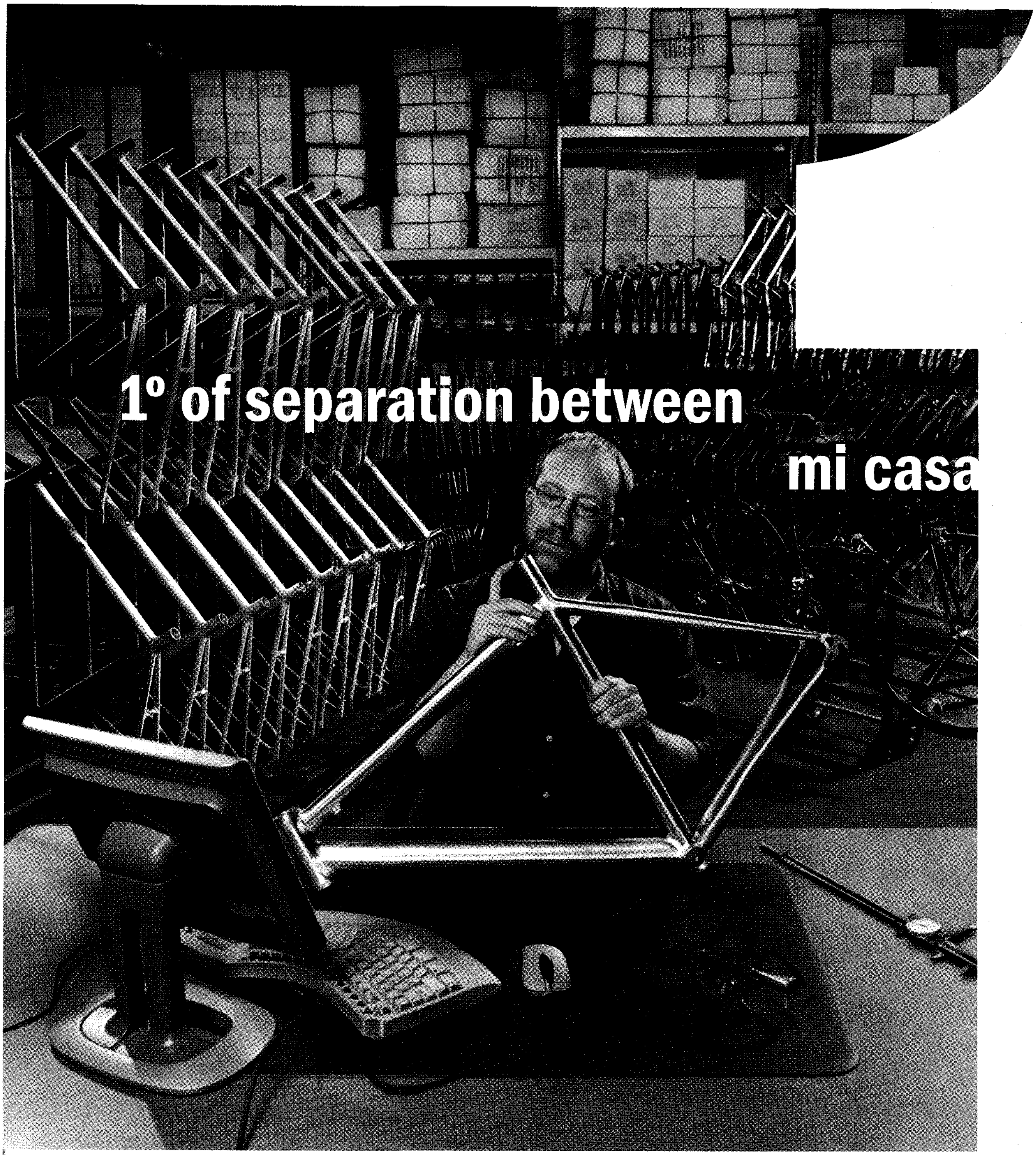
Carter's office at Yale, on the third floor of the Sterling Law Buildings, looks like a cavern in which some poorly understood geologic process has formed stalagmites out of books and scholarly journals: orderly piles of printed matter rise from almost every horizontal surface. Carter can often be found working at his computer among the piles, surrounded by the artifacts of an indeterminate number of writing projects. He is six feet three inches tall, and he has a neat mustache and beard, which are just beginning to go gray. Not long ago, he was diagnosed with type II diabetes, a shock that forced him to overhaul a rather casual attitude toward diet and exercise; he now looks as trim as an athlete, although he has never been one. He wears large glasses with dark frames, which, if they were ever fashionable, are not fashionable now.


Carter at work: legal scholar, Christian, crime novelist. Photograph by Elliott Erwitt.

Carter is forty-seven years old. That means the Yale Law School has been his intellectual home for almost half his life; he has loved teaching law there, he told me, "from the moment I opened the door into my first class." The chain of events that led him to Yale began at Stanford in 1975, when he was a senior. He applied to half a dozen law schools and was accepted by all but one: Harvard. Shortly after he received that rejection, a succession of Harvard officials called to say that the decision had been a mistake. As one of the officials cordially explained, "We assumed from your record that you were white." Now that the school had acquired "additional information," the official said, Carter was welcome to enroll. Hurt and insulted, he instead chose Yale—even though he realized that his race might have been the decisive factor in his acceptance there as well.

These experiences helped to inspire his first book, "Reflections of an Affirmative Action Baby," which was published in 1991. In it he argued that affirmative action tends to provide a disproportionate amount of help to those blacks who need it least, while simultaneously hobbling its beneficiaries with the psychologically powerful suggestion that they are unqualified. Harvard's unspoken message, he wrote, was that his college record "was too good for a black Stanford University undergraduate, but not good enough for a white Harvard law student." Worse still, he set out for New Haven knowing that the doubts Harvard had reinforced in his own mind would also be lurking in the minds of his white classmates and professors.

Carter's book has sometimes been described as a condemnation of affirmative action, but the book, like Carter himself, defies easy categorization. In the first chapter, he writes, "I got into law school because I am black. So what?" In the rest of the book, he pursues numerous thoughtful, unexpected answers to that question. He frankly describes the



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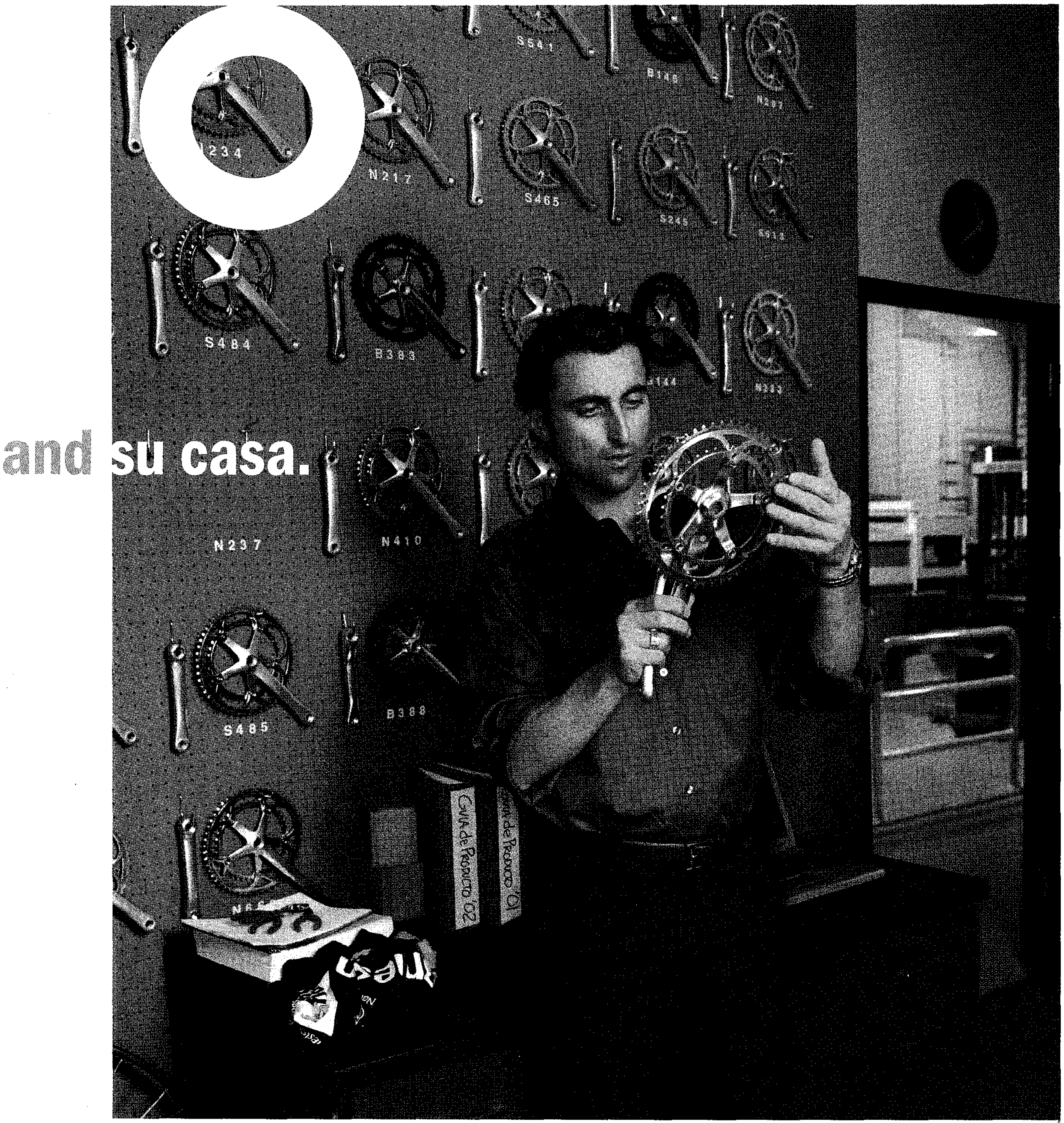
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academic benefits he gained from affirmative action, while also arguing that society, by extending preferential treatment to talented, motivated individuals like him, seeks to acquire "racial justice on the cheap," without confronting the far less tractable problems of the truly disadvantaged.

His own life story underscores his point. He grew up in a middle-class family in which higher education was taken for granted. His father, Lisle C. Carter, Jr., was a lawyer who held various appointments in the Kennedy and Johnson Administrations, became a professor at Cornell University, and served as the president of the University of the District of Columbia. Stephen's paternal grandmother was Eunice Hunton Carter, who was New York City's first black female prosecuting attorney. She was one of Thomas E. Dewey's "twenty against the underworld"—a legendary team of lawyers who ended the careers of a number of mobsters, among them Lucky Luciano. In other words, whatever diversity Carter may have brought to Yale, he is also a third-generation lawyer.

Today, he worries that the success of affirmative-action beneficiaries like him may have helped to push more fundamental issues of equality out of the national consciousness. "The Democrats and Republicans are passionate about, for example, abortion," he told me, as we sat on either side of a small round table, surrounded by books. "If you want to be a judge, abortion is the litmus test for both sides. But nobody cares what your view is about what should be done about the condition of the inner cities, or what should be done about educating poor kids."

Carter and his wife, Enola Aird—who was a classmate at Yale—have a sixteen-year-old daughter and a fourteen-year-old son. I asked Carter if he had a sense of what the world looks like to them, as black children, in comparison with what the world looked like to him in the late sixties. "In a lot of ways, they're more optimistic than my generation was," he said. "I often have these worries at the back of my mind—'Did he say that just because I'm black?' Our children seem relatively free from that." He said that his children's lack of skepticism used to worry him and his wife, but now it pleases them: "It's not a deficiency to be corrected, I now feel, but an advance to be celebrated. Still, the goal should be to bring that attitude to all children. There are plenty of black kids who look out at the world and see a place that has no room for them."

A couple of weeks later, I accompanied Carter as he took two newly hired teaching assistants to lunch. The assistants—Stacey Kamya, who is black, and Mary Fan, who is Asian-American—will be helping him in a contracts course in the fall. They had studied contracts with Carter the year before, and both told me they might want to teach law someday. We walked around the corner to Yorkside Pizza, which Carter called the closest thing the law school has to a faculty club.

During lunch, the conversation turned to law-school admissions. Yale's system is unusual in that many professors participate, by reading application folders and rating them on a scale of two (worst) to four (best). "No one tells us we should be looking for *x* number of *x* kind of students," Carter explained. "One professor can say, 'All I care about is L.S.A.T. scores.' Another can say, 'I'm going to invert the L.S.A.T. scale and give the highest ratings to the people with the lowest scores.'"

"It's surprising how diverse the student body ends up being, given that there's no coördination," Kamya said. (Yale's incoming class in the fall of 2001 was nearly half female and not quite a third "minority.") "One professor was telling me that she knew of another professor who hated for applicants to waive their legal right to see their files, so whenever she found candidates who had refused to waive that right she automatically gave them a four."

"Yet, in spite of all that," Carter said, "it turns out that Yale has the highest L.S.A.T. scores and the highest grade-point averages of any law school. That must mean that this careful faculty selection, so called, actually just consists of plugging numbers into a formula. I think that's unfortunate."

The tendency to rely on numbers is intensified by self-selection. Yale accepts so few applicants that students with sub-stellar records don't bother to apply. Those who do apply have such similar credentials that the people who read their applications inevitably look for shortcuts. "You receive your eighty folders," Carter said, "and you look through them, and you realize that every one of these people would do just fine." His usual method, he said, is to look for something "different or exceptional or unusual" about each candidate, rather than trying to find reasons to reject them. "But, then, I still worry sometimes," he said. "If I realize that I've given good scores to a bunch of applications in a row, the next one is in big trouble.

"In a perfect world," he continued, "I would go back and read all the folders again, but who has the time? It's easy to see why people fall back on grades and

L.S.A.T. scores." One year, as time ran out, Carter still had roughly a dozen folders to go. "I ended up rating those files at random: 2, 3, 4, 2, 3, 4."

Kamya gave a startled laugh.

"That seems to shock you," Carter said. "Does that bother you?"

"It doesn't really bother me," Kamya said. "It's just kind of funny, when you think about it."

Randomly rating indistinguishable folders isn't necessarily different from selecting students on the basis of their numbers. If you rank Yale's pool of admitted students by their L.S.A.T. scores, for example, the scoring gap between the seventy-fifth percentile and the twenty-fifth percentile is so small that the difference between any two students within those limits could conceivably be explained by measurement error.

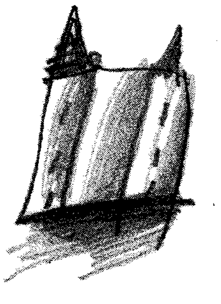
"Years ago, at the high point of the debate over affirmative action," Carter said, "a professor at Harvard suggested establishing a minimum cutoff for grades and L.S.A.T. scores, and then pulling out students at random. In that way, the student body would be exactly as diverse as the pool of minimally qualified applicants. The idea has never caught on, but it isn't obvious that it would be bad."

During his career at Yale, Carter, like most law professors, has published plenty of dry articles for scholarly journals. He has written his books for a wider audience, however, and their popularity has made him a sought-after public speaker. Last April, I followed him to the State University of New York at Buffalo, where he had been invited to deliver an endowed lecture dedicated to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. His theme was one that runs through much of his writing, both popular and scholarly: the role of religion in public life.

That night, he said, "America has a long tradition of enthusiastic welcome of religious voices to the public square" and, at the same time, a "deep fear" of what might happen as a result of that welcome. He called the civil-rights movement "the high-water mark of liberal acceptance of religious activism in public life" in twentieth-century America. In more recent decades, he argued, various laws and (especially) court rulings have had the effect of diminishing or sequestering the "multiple, powerful voices of people of faith." He called for the cultivation and protection of the full spectrum of "prophetic voices"—religious believers who influence public policy mainly through moral suasion and inspiration, without compromising the purity of their faith by getting drawn into the corrupting give-and-take of politics.

Carter first developed these ideas in his second book, "The Culture of Disbelief," which was published in 1993. His subtitle tidily conveys his thesis: "How American Law and Politics Trivialize Religious Devotion." The book became a big seller after President Clinton read it on vacation and praised it. Carter met with Clinton not long afterward and, at the President's request, supplied him with advisory memos on a variety of subjects throughout his Presidency. In one such memo, which Carter dispatched to a private fax number that he had been told to use only for an urgent matter, he spelled out his response to Clinton's intended veto, in 1996, of the bill banning "partial-birth abortions." The President wasn't swayed, but he did reply in detail, in a long, handwritten letter that addressed each of Carter's objections. "In the end, we had fundamentally different views," Carter told me, "but his letter was heartfelt, and it meant a lot to me, and I respected him for sending it."

Carter feels a powerful yearning to instruct and to be heard, as his publication history shows, but he is the opposite of a demagogue. Martha Minow, a Yale classmate who shared an office with him at the Supreme Court and is now a professor at Harvard Law School, told me, "I remember a time back toward the end of law school, or maybe a year or two after, when he said something like 'I'd love to be one of those voices on the radio that people listen to.' I reminded him of that a couple of years ago, and he laughed and said, 'Oh, I must have been so obnoxious.' I think both parts of that story capture him very well."



As Carter gave his lecture in Buffalo, I wondered how many people in the audience realized that he was speaking extemporaneously; he glanced down at the lectern occasionally, but I knew he hadn't brought a text, or even notes. This particular subject is so close to the core of his thinking that he can discuss it indefinitely, in complete paragraphs, without prompting. In his view, the purpose of separating church and state is to protect religious believers from interference by the state, not the other way around. (Carter tends to treat believers of all persuasions almost generically, as coequal "religionists.") As he had told me a few days before, "I don't see any way to respect religious freedom except to make a lot of exceptions from laws that apply to everybody else"—say, by permitting members of the Native American Church to ingest peyote.

Carter's protective attitude toward religion distinguishes him from a number of other political thinkers. Stephen Macedo, a political theorist at Princeton, has written, "Cherishing our 'epistemic diversity,' for Carter, seems to mean not only ignoring the political authority of shared reasons, but also requiring everyone to avoid challenging and criticizing other people's religious convictions." This deep and genuine sense of civility is at odds, in some ways, with his equally strong desire for religious believers to play a valued but indirect role in shaping public policy. Would Martin Luther King, Jr.,'s 1963 "Letter from Birmingham Jail" have had the impact it did if King had written it in an office at Yale and faxed it, confidentially, to the President?

During the question-and-answer period, a member of the SUNY faculty suggested that Carter himself might be one of those prophetic voices whose scarcity in American public life he had just lamented—an observation that others applauded. Carter smiled, but deflected the compliment with a joke. Temperamentally, Carter is far happier on the sidelines than in the center of the field. Earlier that day, he and I had talked about his interest in sports. He had never been on a school team, he told me, but he was always an enthusiastic spectator and went to all the games. He had the usual childhood sports fantasies, but he didn't really yearn to be an athlete himself. As he watched football games or hockey games at school, he said, the person he dreamed of being was the referee.

Carter's public ministry—and it's not unreasonable to think of the extracurricular parts of his career in those terms—is deeply founded in his personal life, every aspect of which is shaped by his faith. Enola Aird, his wife of twenty-one years, is the director of an advocacy group called the Motherhood Project, which is part of an organization called the Institute for American Values. Their family is extremely close, and religion is very much a part of their daily routine; they study the Bible with their children four mornings a week and they pray together frequently. When I first met Carter, he warned me, "My life is pretty simple, in many ways. I spend time with my family, I read the Bible, I go to church, I write, I teach my classes—and that's my life. I play chess, but I don't have any spectacularly interesting hobbies."

He has no discernible vices, either. His best friend, George Jones—who was a year ahead of him at Yale and is now the president-elect of the Washington, D.C., bar association—told me about a trip that their two families took, several years ago, during which Carter drove the three hundred miles from New Haven to Washington, D.C., a journey that includes most of the New Jersey Turnpike, without ever going faster than fifty-five m.p.h. "Stephen stayed in the right lane the whole way," Jones said. "Cars were flying past us. But he was entirely unself-conscious about it, because, as far as he is concerned, driving fifty-five is the right thing to do."

This instinctual rectitude extends to Carter's ideas about child-rearing. A week before, he had told me that his children "don't dress like other children," a comment that made me tremble for their popularity—until I saw a couple of recent photographs, which demonstrated that he meant only that his children don't dress like hoodlums. Carter's sensitivity on the subject of teen-age fashion is partly race-related, he explained. In a society in which cops tend to assume that any black teen is up to no good, clothing choices can have consequences that, for a black child, go far beyond matters of style. He also simply prefers formality. When his son, whose name is Andrew, asked to be called Andy at home, as he was at school, Carter said no.

"For a long time, until our kids were thirteen, they weren't allowed to channel surf," he told me, "because we didn't know what they might come upon. Even today, when they watch certain videos, or watch certain films in a theatre, we require them to avert their eyes. And they understand that. They can predict when we'll want them to do that, and they generally go along. They don't necessarily want their friends to know they are averting their eyes, but they don't try to defy us—they would be uncomfortable with that."

"Yes, I do make things, son. I make things called deals."

Carter the political philosopher is indivisible from Carter the parent. "My view is very unfashionable in the academy today, but I see the family as prior to the state," he said. "That's not to say that the state can't intervene when there is some threat to the health and well-being of the child, or something like that. It's just that I believe the authority of the state over the family should be relatively small, not relatively large." I asked him for an example, and he said, "Take sex education. Now, I am a great believer, in principle, in sex-education courses, in the public schools or elsewhere, but I also believe that parents who have religious objections to some or all of the curriculum of those courses ought to have an absolute right to take their children out of them. When I say that, people sometimes respond, 'Well, then, children will be deprived of information they have to have.' But who says they have to have it? That's like someone who advocates school prayer saying that if kids can't pray in school then kids who don't pray at home, either, will be deprived of something they have to have. For me, it is the parents who should say whether they have to have it or not."

Carter isn't as rigid as he sometimes makes himself sound, and he is aware that some of his moral strictures are potentially humorous. When I asked him if he and his wife had allowed their children to trick-or-treat on Halloween—many devout Christian parents object to the supposed pagan origins of the ritual—Carter said that they had banned trick-or-treating for a while but, under pressure from their children, had ultimately relented (while nonetheless imposing a prohibition on certain costumes). Then he laughed and said, "Other kids never come to our house on Halloween, because we give away Nutri-Grain bars. Well, actually, I think we gave away candy one year, because our kids finally said, 'This is an embarrassment.' "

Carter wrote most of "The Emperor of Ocean Park" in the hours between ten at night and two in the morning, because he didn't want to steal time from his academic work or his family.

He wrote mainly in his study at home, where his wife would sometimes find him sitting in the dark, his face illuminated only by the glow from his computer. Writing the book took four years, from the first page to the last, but the book's real origins reach back much further into his life. Stashed around his house, he told me, are boxes containing "thousands and thousands of bad pages." The book's central figure—a powerful black judge who, as the story opens, has just died under mysterious circumstances—came to Carter twenty years ago and appeared in several earlier, unsuccessful attempts at novels.

I asked Sonny Mehta, the editor-in-chief of Knopf, what had given him the confidence to spend millions on a first novel. "It's both a very original book and a very commercial one," he said. "It's a family saga—the story of generations. It's about politics. It's about the academic world. It's about the legal profession. It's about a black middle class that I certainly haven't read too much about." Indeed, part of the book's appeal is its setting within what its narrator describes as "a larger slice of financially comfortable African America than most white Americans probably think exists outside the sports and entertainment worlds." Although the principal characters in the book are very different from the real people in Carter's life (the narrator's respect for traffic laws is questionable; his wife is having an affair), a reader often has the feeling of being allowed privileged glimpses into the author's own stratum of "the darker nation." The book's narrator, Professor Talcott Garland, describes a smug white law student, in whose posture and attitude he detects "the unsubtle racism of the supposedly liberal white student who cannot quite bring himself to believe that his black professor could know more than he. About anything." The student suggests that the course's subject matter is irrelevant, "because the rich guys always win." Garland's response: "I glare at the cocky student and see, for a horrible moment, the future, or maybe just the enemy: young, white, confident, foolish, skinny, sullen, multiply pierced, bejeweled, dressed in grunge, cornsilk hair in a ponytail, utterly the cynical conformist, although he thinks he is an iconoclast. A few generations ago, he would have been the fellow wearing his letterman's sweater inside out, to prove to everybody how little it meant to him."

Carter has been astonished by the response to his book: a first printing of two hundred and seventy-five thousand copies, a twelve-city promotional tour, a national print and television advertising campaign, a movie deal with Warner Bros. I asked him if his four-million-dollar advance had in any sense presented a moral problem. He hesitated for a while before answering, then said, "One element of the old-fashioned way in which I was raised is that you don't talk about money. So I don't want to talk about money. I will say this, though, and I want to put it delicately: We are Christians, and we are of the traditional Christian view that from those to whom much is given much is required. Whenever we have financial good fortune, our first obligation is to recognize that we are supposed to give a lot of it away—and really a lot of it. That is just an absolute obligation of the faith."

Carter does worry sometimes that his new book may expose him to a kind of scrutiny that he has never had to face before—that he is "undefended" as a novelist in a way that he is not as a scholar. If a reader finds one of his characters implausible, he told me, he won't be able to dig into a pile of books in his office and prove that reader wrong: "I feel much more naked, for lack of a better word." Mainly, though, he feels the same sort of joyful curiosity that he has always felt, as a teacher, as a writer, as a law clerk, as a student. The book's main significance for him—the fulfillment of his childhood ambition—is entirely personal and, therefore, extremely well defended. Something he said made me think of a remark he had made a couple of weeks before, in a different context. "Many years ago," he had told me, "I wrote somewhere that I thought that the job of a scholar is not to join a movement but to follow the truth wherever it leads. Another scholar—a very respected scholar—didn't like that very much, and wrote something like 'That's a twelve-year-old nerd's vision of intellectual endeavor.' " He smiled, leaned his head to one side, and added, "I know he meant that as an insult, but I took it as a compliment." ♦

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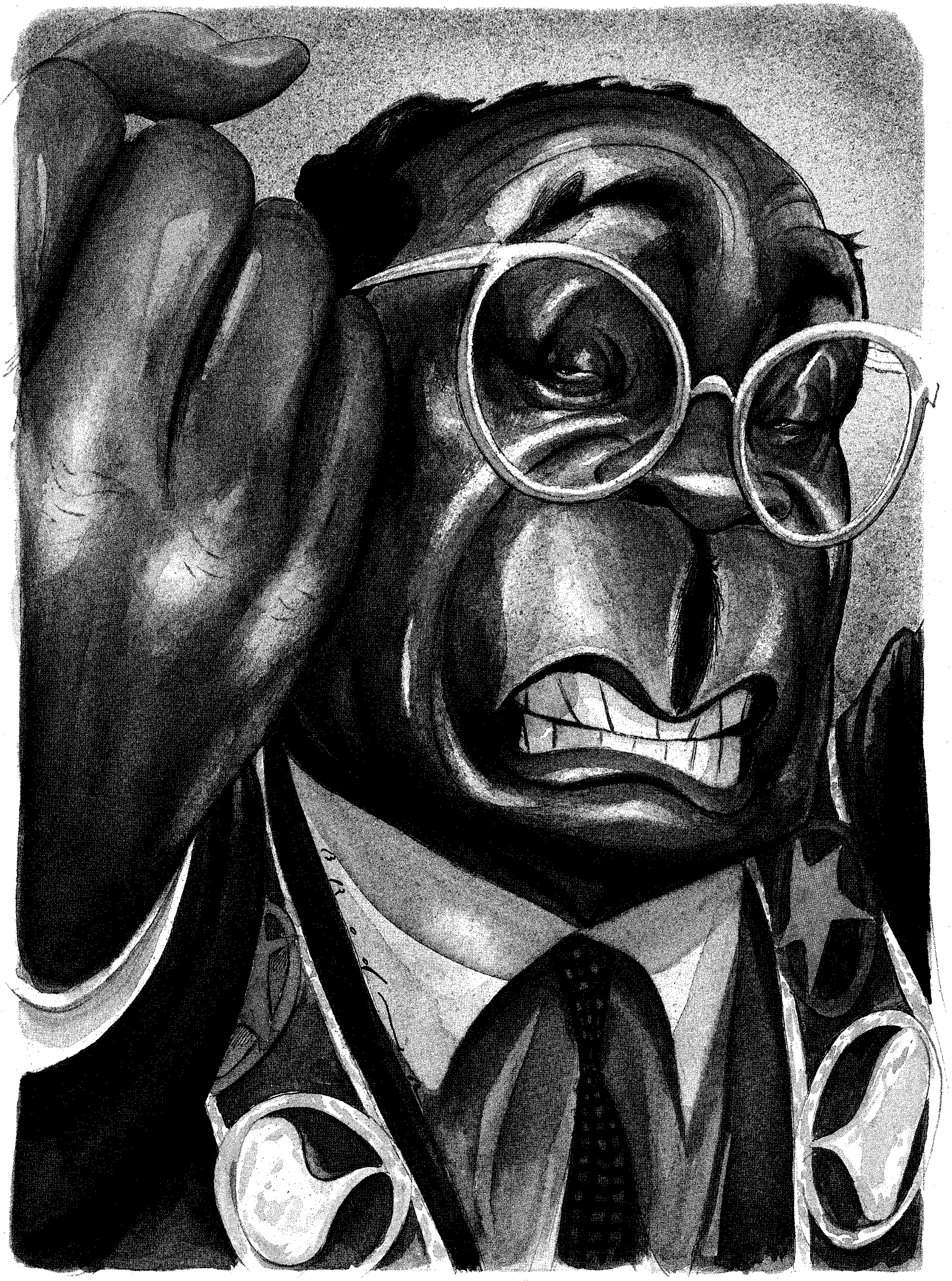


One businessman saw the elections as "a make-or-break situation for all Africa"—but, since then, state violence has only escalated.

LETTER FROM ZIMBABWE

WASTELAND

Comrade Mugabe is clinging to power, and taking his country down with him.

BY PHILIP GOUREVITCH

Fifteen years ago, Richard Pascall, a professional hunter and safari guide, bought a fifty-two-thousand-acre farm near the village of Turk Mine, in Matabeleland, the western region of Zimbabwe, and began raising a herd of African black rhinoceroses. He went about this in the usual way: fencing in a large patch of bush (eighty per cent of his land), releasing some rhinos onto it, and leaving them to their own devices. That's about all there is to rhino-culture: if water is scarce, as it is in Matabeleland, you pump some of it for the animals, and if poachers are to be feared, as they are wherever rhinos range, you establish patrols to keep them at bay. Beyond that, you stay out of the way and hope the rhinos will be fruitful and multiply, because they are among the most endangered animals on earth. Since 1970, when seventy thousand black rhinos roamed the continent, poachers and habitat destruction have depleted their numbers by ninety-six per cent, and today just twenty-seven hundred survive. By contrast, Pascall started out with eleven rhinos, and by the turn of the century he had thirty. His farm, Gourlays Ranch, where he lived with his wife, Carol, and two daughters, was considered one of the most successful rhino-salvage efforts in Africa—subsidized by foreign investors and contributors, valued at thirty million dollars, and protected under Zimbabwean law as a wildlife conservancy. But two years ago, when a man who called himself Hitler Hunzvi turned up at the gate, leading a gang of more than a hundred armed vigilantes, the Pascalls suddenly found themselves as endangered as their mammoth wards.

Hunzvi claimed the Pascalls' land in the name of the Zimbabwean people, and advised Pascall to surrender if he didn't want worse things to happen to him. Pascall stood his ground. There was a scuffle. Pascall wore a pistol in a shoulder holster, and, as Hunzvi's men grappled to disarm him, the gun discharged twice. Nobody was hit, but the shots heightened the tension. Hunzvi's men entered Pascall's house, where the walls are heavily hung with the trophy heads of big game. They made him open a safe in which he kept his hunting rifles, and helped themselves to a dozen. "I'm a born-again Christian," Pascall told me recently, "and I sincerely believe that day I had angels all round me, because they should have killed me."

Hunzvi's raid on Gourlays was filmed by a cameraman from Zimbabwe's state-controlled television, and in pictures the crux of the confrontation was plain to see: the Pascalls are white, and their attackers were black. Hunzvi was the head of the national association of liberation war veterans, who in the nineteen-seventies had fought for black-majority rule against the white-supremacist regime of Rhodesia, as the country—a British colony—was then known. Independence had come in 1980, but twenty years later, although whites counted for less than one per cent of the country's twelve million citizens, they still controlled most of its wealth, and just forty-five hundred white farmers held title to seventy per cent of the prime agricultural land. In seeking to "liberate" the Pascalls' property by force, Hunzvi purported to be fulfilling the revolution he had fought for—and, as the presence of the state television made clear, he was doing so with the blessing of President Robert Mugabe.

Hunzvi, however, was not a veteran of any combat. He had spent much of the war in Poland, where he trained as a doctor and married a local woman who later left him and wrote a memoir, "White Slave," in which she remembered her husband as a wife-beating, "unfaithful, vain sadist." Back in Zimbabwe, Hunzvi managed in the early nineties to insinuate himself into the state bureaucracy, and, as an assessor for the War Victims Compensation Fund, doled out subsidies to injured veterans. Within a few years, he had bankrupted the fund by awarding huge sums for scurrilous complaints to a veritable *Who's Who* of President Mugabe's ruling clique. (Mugabe's brother-in-law, for example, received seventy thousand dollars for ulcers and a scar on his left knee.) At the same time, Hunzvi began mobilizing mobs to stage street demonstrations in Harare, the nation's capital, demanding pensions and a host of other benefits for veterans. Many of Hunzvi's followers were plainly too young to have fought in the seventies, but the spectacle of rebellious liberation fighters embarrassed Mugabe, who had come to power at independence as a liberation hero. When the scandal of the war victims' fund was made public, and Mugabe realized how deeply the rot reached into his court, he cut a deal with Hunzvi which has defined Zimbabwean history ever since: every war veteran would get a hefty onetime disbursement, followed by a lifetime monthly check, as well as free medical care and free access to education—and, above all, land.

The demand for land had been Hunzvi's final coup: he threatened to lead his men into the bush to wage war and seize white-owned farms if Mugabe did not capitulate. After all, Mugabe had promised during the independence struggle to grant every black Zimbabwean some acreage as a reward for victory. Over time, however, he had proved less interested in resolving the land issue than in exploiting it as a bully pulpit from which to deflect attention from the predatory corruption of his ruling party, ZANU-P.F. (Zimbabwe African National Union—Patriotic Front). His schemes for redistributing farms had been consistently reckless, illegal, and destructive, each bringing greater suffering than the last to the rural poor it purported to serve. Much of the best land seized by the government wound up in the hands of Mugabe's cronies; farm laborers were left

STEVE BRODNER

"Relax, sir. I'm a professional driver and this is a closed course."

unemployed and homeless; productive farms were laid to waste; and impoverished Zimbabweans who were given plots were not given legal title but were simply allowed to subsist as squatters. Under the circumstances, Mugabe regarded Hunzvi not as a menace but as an ally, and announced plans to nationalize roughly half of the remaining white farmland in the country, without compensation.

The combined effects of the government's payout to the war veterans and the devastating blow to commercial agriculture—which accounted for half the country's foreign-exchange income and more than a quarter of its jobs—plunged Zimbabwe's already beleaguered economy into chaos. The currency lost nearly half its value overnight; international investors and aid donors bolted; and many whites who had been sufficiently content with their privilege that they had stayed out of politics since independence began making common cause with reform-minded black activists. In February of 2000, when Mugabe unleashed Hunzvi's "war veterans" to occupy white-owned farms by force, the action was clearly understood as punishment for white support of the nascent opposition party, the M.D.C. (Movement for Democratic Change), which had just led a successful campaign to defeat a new constitution that would have expanded Mugabe's already extraordinary powers. It was the first time Mugabe had been rejected by voters, and, with parliamentary elections looming in June of 2000, the assault on whites was accompanied by a less publicized but often more brutal campaign of violence against black oppositionists and sympathizers.

Zimbabweans who thought that Mugabe had paid off Hunzvi to keep him quiet found themselves wondering who had ultimately coöpted whom. Richard Pascall had no doubt about it. He was an active M.D.C. supporter, and his farm was among the first in Matabeleland to be invaded. After surrendering his rifles, he had watched Hunzvi's men go on a rampage around his property, looting blankets and radios from the homes of his ranch staff. The staff had fled in terror, but a young black neighbor who wandered into the housing area during the attack was beaten up and carried off by the veterans. Hunzvi himself didn't stay long at Gourlays; he had other farms to invade, and he was busy, too, running a medical clinic outside Harare which was used as a torture center, where naked M.D.C. supporters were beaten on the bottoms of their feet and subjected to electric shocks. Hunzvi died last year, apparently of AIDS and malaria, but his "war veterans" have continued his campaign. More than a hundred of his followers remain encamped on the Pascalls' ranch, claiming patches of land for themselves and selling off plots to local villagers.

"We've had to adapt to a form of coexistence," Pascall told me, when I visited the place one afternoon in February. His safari business had collapsed, but he refused to leave his rhinos. "I speak the language fluently. I grew up here with these people as playmates. So it's a give-and-take, but mostly we give and they take."

Robert Mugabe is seventy-eight years old, and has repeatedly vowed to stay in power for the rest of his life. In this spirit of relentlessness, he has made it a crime, punishable by six months in jail, for two or more people in Zimbabwe to meet and discuss politics without obtaining a permit from the police at least four days in advance. The permit is just a nicety; the Public Order and Security Act (POSA), which elaborates the offense, allows the police to bar whomever they like from attending even an authorized political discussion, or to break it up at any time without explanation. To be sure, the law doesn't prohibit a person from conducting a solitary monologue about politics, but anyone doing so must be careful what he says, since POSA also makes it a crime, punishable by a big fine and a year in jail, to make a false statement "engendering hostility towards" or "causing hatred, contempt or ridicule of" the President, or, indeed, to make any statement "about or concerning" him that is "abusive, indecent, obscene or false." The sharpest sting of this last stipulation is in its tail—in the choice of the word "or" to qualify the word "false"—which tells you that even an irrefutably true criticism of the President is grounds for arrest and punishment.

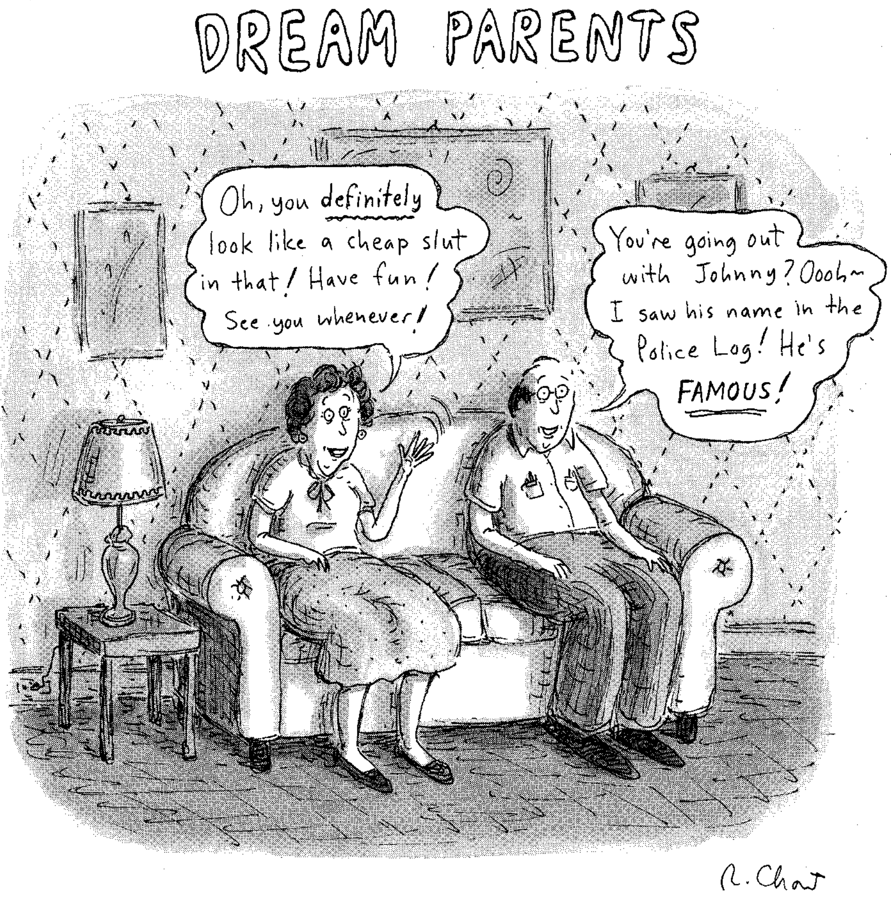
Comrade Mugabe, as he likes to be called, was running for reëlection when he signed POSA into law, in January, and his message to voters could not have been clearer: Put up and shut up, or else. Zimbabweans were alarmed but not surprised. Officially, Zimbabwe remains a parliamentary democracy, but in reality Mugabe presides over the country as a tyrant in the classical sense of the word: an autocrat who rules exclusively for his own gratification, with contempt for the common good. Although he has continued to stage elections in order to maintain a veneer of international legitimacy, his preferred vote-winning strategies have always been intimidation and terror. Despite the brutal campaign in the parliamentary elections of 2000, however, the M.D.C. had succeeded in sweeping fifty-seven of a hundred and twenty contested seats, and now Mugabe was desperate. The Presidential election was to be held in mid-March, and for the first time in his political career he was running as the underdog candidate, trailing the M.D.C. leader, Morgan Tsvangirai, a former trade-union boss, by substantial margins. Zimbabweans finally appeared to have had enough of a regime that had transformed what was once one of Africa's most prosperous countries into a domain of bloody disorder with one of the fastest-shrinking economies on earth.

The annual inflation is close to a hundred and fifteen per cent. The national treasury is bankrupt. The Army is engaged in a futile intervention in Congo's civil war, at a cost of dozens of lives and an estimated million dollars a day. The health-care system is essentially defunct, and, with a quarter of the population infected with AIDS, the funeral business is among the country's last remaining growth industries. When Mugabe said of Zimbabwe last year, "This is my territory and that which is mine I cling [to] unto death," his subjects might well have wondered whether he was speaking of their death: the life expectancy of Zimbabweans has fallen by some fifteen years during his tenure, and now hovers around forty. Sixty per cent of Zimbabweans are unemployed, and those who have jobs earn, on average, less than they did at independence. The rest of the population scrapes by on less than a dollar a day, which might still buy a bellyful if the crippling effect of the farm invasions—compounded this year by regional drought—hadn't created drastic food shortages, raising the prospect of imminent nationwide famine.

Unable to run on his record, Mugabe sought instead to run from it, by rallying his crumbling black base around the spectre of a common enemy: the whites. He didn't care that ninety-seven per cent of M.D.C. voters and candidates were black. Behind "these human superficies," he told the ZANU-P.F. central committee in July of 2000, Tsvangirai's party represented "the resurgence of white power" and "the revulsive ideology of return to white settler rule." In his view, the new opposition was just the old Rhodesian enemy got up in blackface, an imperialist fifth column, sponsored by London—with help from Washington—"a counter-revolutionary Trojan horse contrived and nurtured by the very inimical forces that enslaved and oppressed our people yesterday." And at his first rally of this year's campaign he declared, "We are in a war to defend our rights and the interests of our people. The British have decided to take us on through the M.D.C. . . . We went to war; we went to prison; we have suffered over the years; but we are not afraid of the struggle. We will not run away. You can count on us to fight."

Tsvangirai, for his part, preached a strict gospel of nonviolence, rule of law, economic reform, pluralism, withdrawal from Congo, friendly relations with Western aid donors, and legal and equitable land redistribution, and he never let Mugabe forget that his status as the incumbent was a staggering campaign handicap. Tsvangirai's rallies—when he was not barred from holding them, as he often was—were defiantly festive affairs, with much song and dance. A burly man, with a fearless, jovial air, he came across as a populist, and drew his greatest support from urbanites and the young. (Two out of three Zimbabweans are under the age of twenty-five, and have no memory of colonialism.)

But the M.D.C.'s mild-mannered message of reform often sounded naïve in the face of ZANU's violence. In the runup to the elections, more than a hundred M.D.C. members and supporters were murdered, and thousands more were beaten, tortured, or raped by ZANU-P.F. thugs, often operating in complicity with the police and with Zimbabwe's Central Intelligence Organization. M.D.C. officials and candidates were arbitrarily arrested, and harassed with ab-


DREAM PARENTS
Oh, you definitely look like a cheap slut in that! Have fun! See you whenever!
You're going out with Johnny? Ooooh— I saw his name in the Police Log! He's FAMOUS!
R. Chast

surd criminal charges. (Tsvangirai himself was a target of assassination attempts, and in the final weeks of the campaign was accused of plotting to kill Mugabe, and booked for treason.) Oppositionists' homes and offices were ransacked and, not infrequently, fire bombed. Reporters and editors in Zimbabwe's independent press corps were subjected to the same treatment, while many foreign reporters and their news organizations were either expelled from the country or refused accreditation to work there. As the election campaign intensified, ZANU-P.F. youth militias fanned out across the country, setting up roadblocks, where voters who could not present a party card were beaten and informed that their votes would not be secret: to support the M.D.C. was to risk death, the militia said, and the lesson was underscored by the slogan "Vote ZANU-P.F. and live."

Toward the end of February, with three weeks to go before the voting, I flew into Bulawayo, Zimbabwe's second-largest city and the capital of Matabeleland, and was given a two-week tourist visa. As a stronghold of M.D.C. support, Bulawayo was a community suspended between hope and dread. I was curious about the whites, a vestigial population. They thought of themselves as Zimbabweans first and Africans more generally, but although there were distinct differences between their culture and the European culture from which they had derived, the differences between their world and that of their black neighbors and compatriots were even greater. Many were giving up on Zimbabwe, and emigrating; sendoff parties—dour affairs—had become far more frequent among them than births, weddings, and funerals.

Tens of thousands of blacks with the means to get out have also fled in recent years, adding a severe brain drain to Zimbabwe's woes. But many black Zimbabweans in exile hope to return if conditions improve. For whites, departure is almost always permanent—a surrender, or a cutting of losses, and one need not indulge in colonial nostalgia, or overlook the injustice of white affluence, to recognize that the loss is Zimbabwe's as well. For all his fine talk of economic "indigenization" and black empowerment, Mugabe has betrayed the promises of liberation and self-determination, and, faced with the evidence of his failure, he has come to behave toward his country like a vicious child with a toy he has broken, smashing away at it as if to prove that if he cannot make it work he can make sure that it never forgets to whom it belongs.

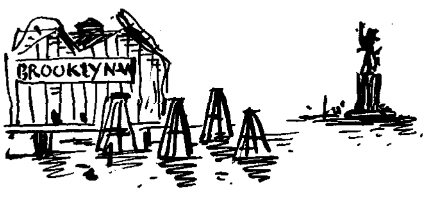
"You know what's at stake?" the Bulawayo businessman said to me. "Survival." He was in his early forties, a chain-smoker, with a scrappy manner, a small man with a big voice, and he had a habit of setting up his statements with questions. "You want to know how people feel here right now? There's only one word. 'Threatened.' Threatened. Blacks and whites are shit-scared."

"There's another word, too," said his wife, who was the same age and same height as he. " 'Hopeful.' "

"Goddam right," he said. "Shit-scared *and* hopeful. Blacks and whites."

The businessman and his wife are white. Both were working hard for an M.D.C. victory. We sat in their kitchen, where the traffic was heavy, with dinner cooking, children coming and going, and visitors appearing at the door: a white farmer friend, with news of the latest war-veteran activity near his farm; a black M.D.C. candidate arranging for the businessman to drive him through his rural constituency on a campaign swing; and a white man with a fistful of e-mail-encryption software for the family computer. "Meet the I.T. man for the coverts," the businessman said. "You see, everybody's doing his bit." Every half hour, he jumped up and went into his den to check the TV news headlines.

Mugabe had just expelled the head of a European Union election-observer team, calling him an illegal alien and accusing him of political "cheek." Just as Africans aren't invited to referee the legitimacy of European elections, the President said, the conduct of Zimbabwe's vote would be judged by observer teams from southern Africa and elsewhere on the continent, notably Nigeria.



The European Union had responded by imposing "smart sanctions" against the regime, targeting Mugabe and his inner circle by freezing their assets in the E.U., barring them from travelling there, and sending their children home from some European schools. Too little, too late, argued M.D.C. leaders, who had been calling for such measures for years. The businessman agreed. He considered it racist to suggest that African elections should be judged by "African standards," and it angered him especially that the government of South Africa, the regional superpower, was conspicuously reluctant to criticize Mugabe, even as Zimbabwe's decline was causing its own economy to suffer.

There was never any chance that the election would be either free or fair, yet, between Tsvangirai's popularity and Mugabe's strong-arm tactics, nobody could say what the outcome might be. Early in February, Mugabe's information minister, Jonathan Moyo, had declared, "We should not demean the African struggles for liberation by using the fiction of democracy." The businessman also considered the election to be about something much larger than Zimbabwe—"a make-or-break situation for all Africa"—and he said, "If democracy prevails here, the First World better take note and come to the party, because it's southern Africa that's being saved." Then he said, "You know, the militias are camped two miles from here in a school—fifty or more of them, ZANU-P.F. youth. What's that about? Kids putting up campaign posters? No. Intimidation. It's just total harassment and intimidation."

I'd heard about the militia presence the day before, from Fletcher Dulini, the M.D.C.'s national treasurer, who told me about attacks he'd encountered on a recent campaign swing: a brick through a windshield, a log swung at the door of his car as it passed, the police refusing to intervene when the candidates complained. "This is their strategy," Dulini said of ZANU-P.F. agents. "That sort of psychology that is a kind of mental torture—they do it just to waste our time and keep us from campaigning about the issues." Twice during our conversation, his cell phone rang with reports of attacks on M.D.C. offices in Harare. Dulini spoke of these things with a chipper, goes-with-the-territory

"Do you have any problem being fired by a woman?"

air, but the third time his cell phone rang he hung up in an anxious mood, and left immediately. His wife had just seen a militia mob milling near their home.

Half an hour later, as I drove through Dulini's neighborhood, I came around a bend and there they were: twenty or thirty young men on either side of the road, jostling along in a pack at a hurried, agitated pace, silhouetted in the dusk. I drove through the gantlet they formed, and they paid no attention, but a mile farther on I realized that my chest and jaw were still tight. Later still, I met a twenty-three-year-old gardener and M.D.C. sympathizer, who had been abducted by ZANU-P.F. thugs a week earlier from a local shopping center. He and another man were beaten for several hours, then loaded into a truck, blindfolded, and driven into the bush, where they were made to lie on the ground and roll from side to side while ten men took turns whipping them. Finally, they were stripped naked, and left by the roadside. The gardener's back was crosshatched from his shoulders to his waist with stringy scabs that were starting to knit into scars.

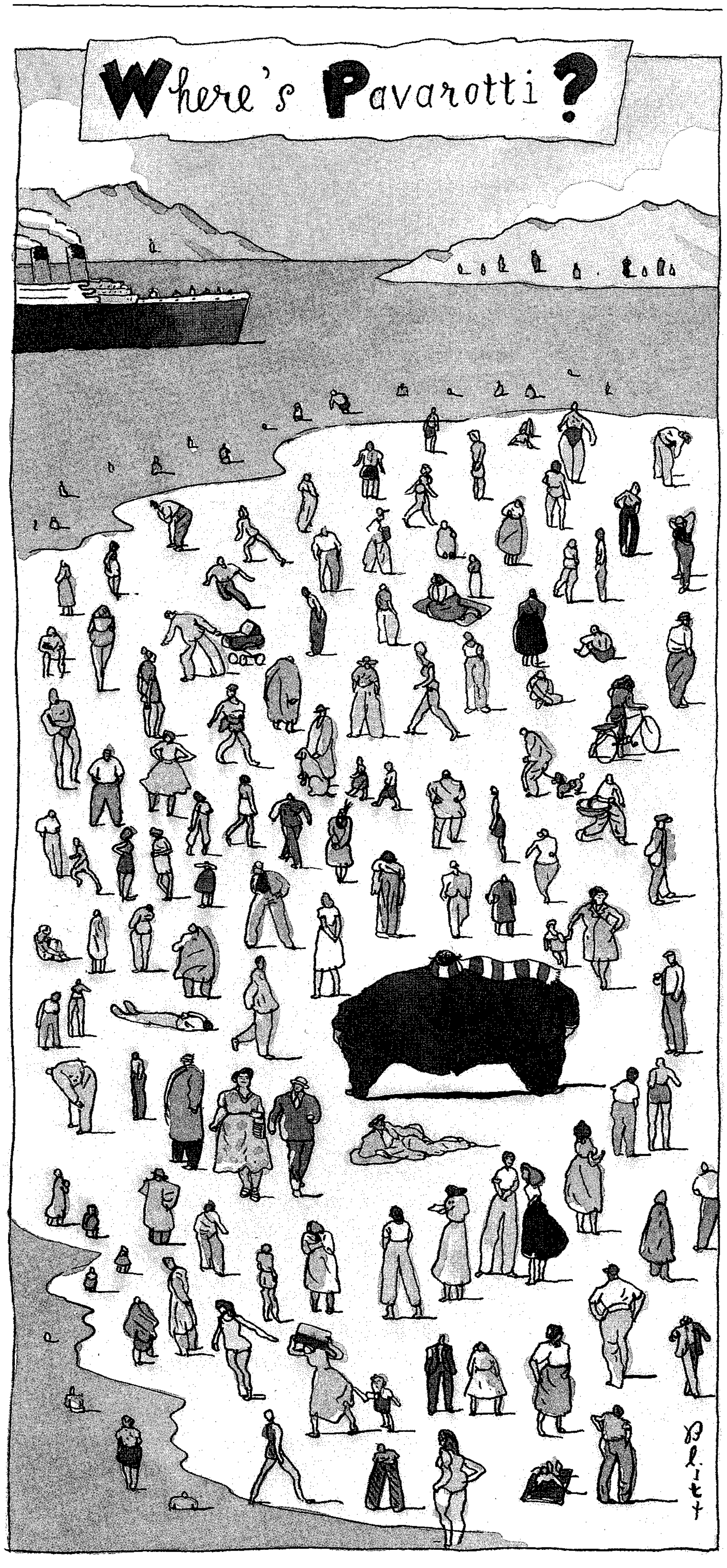
"Mugabe's a piece of work, and he deserves to be in prison with Milosevic," the businessman said. Zimbabweans often spoke of Mugabe and Slobodan Milosevic in the same breath, especially to say what the businessman's wife told me: "Two years ago, it was watching Milosevic go down that moved us to think, Oh, maybe that could happen here—nonviolent change."

"Actually, two years ago it was the 'no' vote on the constitution that changed it for me," the businessman said. "People here stood up and said no. Seeing that they could do that—that was powerful."

The businessman and his wife seemed to draw strength from talking of courage and possibility. But toward the end of the evening we moved into the den to watch a special television report being broadcast from South Africa about preëlection violence committed in Zimbabwe in recent weeks by ZANU-P.F. militants. The images were grim: lacerated bodies, punctured bodies, brown bodies bruised charcoal black. There was a woman who had been whipped for trying to protect her husband from a whipping. The woman was carrying her daughter in her arms, and the baby's cheek had been torn open by a barbed-wire lash.

"We have to talk about what to do," the businessman said. "I want the kids out of the country." His wife agreed that if Mugabe remained in power Zimbabwe was no place to raise children, but the prospect of leaving upset her as much as the thought of staying. "What would you do?" she asked.

On the eve of the election, I received an e-mail from the businessman's wife, reminding me of another time when whites and blacks were both scared and hopeful: April 18, 1980, Zimbabwe's independence day. After seven years of war, the white-supremacist Prime Minister of Rhodesia, Ian Smith, had done what he had sworn he would never do "in a thousand years," and yielded to black-majority rule. In Harare, the British flag flying above the state house was taken down—the last time it flew over an African colony—and nobody knew what to expect. Any number of whites, filled with Smith's propaganda images of black Marxist guerrillas bent on avenging historical wrongs, pictured themselves slaughtered in their beds. But Mugabe went on television and read a speech that is still remembered throughout Africa and abroad as one of the great declarations of the age. In the name of reconciliation, he issued what amounted to a blanket amnesty to everyone on all sides of the recent conflict, and declared that he would "draw a line through


Where's Pavarotti?

BARRY BLITT

the past." The businessman's wife's e-mail consisted of a short excerpt from that speech:

> If yesterday I fought you as an enemy, today you have become a friend and an ally with the same national interest, loyalty, rights and duties as myself. . . . The wrongs of the past must now stand forgiven and forgotten. If ever we look to the past, let us do so for the lesson the past has taught us, namely that oppression and racism are inequalities that must never find scope in our political and social system. It could never be a correct justification that because the whites oppressed us yesterday when they had power, the blacks must oppress them today because they have power. An evil remains an evil whether practiced by white against black or black against white.

Mugabe, who was reared in Jesuit mission schools and has half a dozen college and university degrees to his name—three of them earned by correspondence during ten years spent in Rhodesian jails—has always been described as a hard man to know, bitter and secretive by nature. That he is devoid of charm is indisputable. Even on his election posters, he appeared lonely and joyless: an old man, with a thin scolding mouth and frightened eyes fixed behind big spectacles in a blank, distant stare, angrily shaking a raised fist. But, for all his high-blown anti-colonial and Marxist rhetoric, he is famously opportunistic on most matters of political principle, at once hard-nosed and capricious, a man of his word, whose word is forever changing. In his intolerance for dissent, however, he is absolute and unyielding, and, once the Rhodesian state had been dismantled, he recognized that whites were no longer a threat to him. On the contrary, he needed them to maintain the economy while he established his power. Although a hundred thousand whites—half of the white population—had left Zimbabwe by 1985, those who stayed prospered. Anthony Lewis, writing in this magazine a year after independence, described an "Alice-in-Wonderland quality" in the attitude of white Zimbabweans toward Mugabe: "He was the chief villain. Now he is the person on whom white hopes rest, the man of moderation and authority." Mugabe's conciliatory racial stance also served as a convenient smoke screen in 1982, when he sent a special division of his army into Matabeleland, the home territory of the man who was then his chief political rival, Joshua Nkomo, in a bid to silence dissent there forever.

The unit—trained and equipped by North Korea, in a gesture of revolutionary solidarity—was known as the Fifth Brigade, but it is better remembered by the name Mugabe gave it: Gukurahundi, which means "the rain that washes the chaff away in advance of the spring rains." "Some of the measures we shall take are measures which will be extra-legal," Mugabe told parliament as he prepared for the operation, adding, "An eye for an eye and an ear for an ear may not be adequate in our circumstances. We might very well demand two ears for one ear and two eyes for one eye." This proved to be a gross understatement. During the Gukurahundi terror, at least twenty thousand civilians were slaughtered, while many more were driven from their homes, flogged, starved to the brink of death, raped, or, at least, forced to witness such atrocities, and even to pretend to celebrate them in song and dance. ("First you will eat your chickens, then your goats, then your cattle, then your donkeys. Then you will eat your children, and finally you will eat the dissidents," a Gukurahundi officer told villagers who had been deliberately cut off from food supplies.) The dead were generally disposed of in unmarked mass graves, and survivors were assured that if they ever spoke of their ordeal they could expect a similar fate.

The terror was brought to a halt only in 1987, when Nkomo, who had fled into exile, signed a "unity" pact, and what remained of his party was subsumed into Mugabe's, transforming Zimbabwe into a de-facto one-party state. For the next decade—until Hitler Hunzvi loosed his mobs on the streets of Harare—few Zimbabweans dared to oppose the regime, and those who did were easily coöpted, or, if that tactic failed, crushed. Indeed, looking back, many Zimbabweans will tell you that if Mugabe had stepped down, as many in his party had urged him to do, at the time of the last Presidential elections, in 1996, he would probably be remembered forgivingly, as he likes to imagine himself, as a hero of liberation, and an eminent African statesman—if not a Nelson Mandela, whose all-eclipsing nobility Mugabe bitterly resents. He would certainly not rank among the infamous dictators for whom he has expressed admiration over the years: Nicolae Ceaușescu, of Romania; Kim Il Sung, of North Korea; Enver Hoxha, of Albania; and Mengistu Haile Mariam, of Ethiopia, who is wanted for crimes against humanity at home and now lives under political asylum in Harare. But ever since Mugabe's pact with Hunzvi and the "war veterans," he has steered a course of pure destruction.

The staple food of Zimbabwe is maize. People eat it as a milled cereal boiled into porridge, and they regard it in the way that Asians regard rice—as essential. But since the farm invasions began, in 2000, commercial farmers have seen their harvests drop by at least forty per cent a year, and by mid-February there was no maize to be found in most stores. (It didn't help matters that war veterans had seized control of grain distribution, and that maize was being trucked to ZANU-P.F. rallies as bait to lure the crowds.) Zimbabwe has long been known as the region's breadbasket, and neighboring countries were also feeling the pinch. "Total food deficit," a white farmer I'll call JoJo said. "It's going to kill southern Africa."

Already, farmers were slaughtering their livestock because the government had proclaimed maize a strategic resource and confiscated animal-feed reserves. "Chicken and egg production is plummeting," JoJo said, adding, "Think of it from a livestock point of view, and it's symbolic of the rest of the country. There are ninety thousand pigs in this country. Slaughter them now, and it'll take four to five years to get pork back up to speed. Same with everything." He went on, "We used to have a strategic reserve of maize of eight hundred thousand tons, and that was untouchable. Last year, the government sold it to get foreign currency to buy fuel. Why did they run out of fuel? The story is they stole it all. Corruption."

JoJo's farm is about fifty miles northwest of Bulawayo, a spread of forty-two thousand acres in the low rolling veldt that flattens out toward the frontier with Botswana and the Kalahari sands. His family has been on the place since 1896, and JoJo figures that three-quarters of it is now occupied, by some fifteen hundred people. Shortly after his land was invaded, in mid-April of 2000, one of his neighbors, a white farmer named Martin Olds, was murdered by war veterans. "We were warned that armed people had moved into the area, and I'd been tipped off that he and I were possible targets," JoJo said. "We all moved into one house here, but he was on his own. We were alerted at 6:20 A.M. that he'd been surrounded. When we tried to get to help him, they had roadblocks in the way and we were shot at. Eventually, the police came and let us in, saying he was still firing indiscriminately. But in fact he was dead." JoJo didn't want to dwell on the incident. "They'd murdered a couple of white guys in the east, in Mashonaland, so they had to murder a couple here to send the message."

JoJo had been heavily involved in the parliamentary election campaign in 2000 as an M.D.C. activist, but this year he said, "We're lying low. If we didn't, we'd be slaughtered." He said he'd lost count of how many times his family had been threatened, but as part of his survival strategy he has learned over the past two years not to blame the squatters personally for their presence on his land. After all, he said, "Not one resettled African has title. It's a monumental cock-up. They're just being dumped on the land. They're victims, in their own way, as much as we are." Still, he took some pride in comparing the squatters' drought-stricken maize patches—sunburned leaves rattling on dry, stubby stalks—with his own well-irrigated acreage, with its tall, fat-eared yield. "They don't know what they're doing," he said, adding, "What I hate is how impotent I feel—impotent because we've been closed down to help people that are starving, impotent to help development, impotent to get out and help the opposition."

JoJo lives in a house that his grandparents built in the nineteen-twenties, a place redolent of the colonial idyll, with floors carpeted in leopard skins and a maid who brought tea in a Spode china pot ("rosebud chintz") with a Wedgwood cup, saucer, and sugar bowl. At night, JoJo produced some port, and said, "I think every Zimbabwean white farmer appreciates by now the need for major land reform, but none of us can identify with the way it's being done." He told me that he'd have no problem giving up as much as half of his land, as long as he could give his expertise along with it, so that resettled blacks had some hope of agricultural success.

In the morning, he drove me for several hours around his property: chicken houses; maize fields; a large area of low sandy soil laced with drip-irrigation hoses, where paprika, a highly lucrative export crop, is grown; a refrigerated room where fresh peas awaited shipment to London green markets; a machine shop; the farmworkers' housing; and a school and medical clinic. It was a small village. I was amazed at how much of it remained operational after two years of occupation, but JoJo said he'd been reduced to little more than subsistence farming.

"It cannot be in the national interest to destroy this," he said. "We've had sixty to eighty of these war-vet guys beating at the gate with axes, and I'll sit down and offer them tea and talk to them, because what are your alternatives? If you lose your cool, that's what they want. I think the government is terribly frustrated that we're still here. They thought we'd all just pack up and leave." He'd been tempted. "I was offered six million U.S. dollars for this property four years ago, before all this started, and we debated it. But we're Africans. This is our life."

One afternoon, in Bulawayo, I stopped by the office of David Coltart, a constitutional and human-rights lawyer, who is also an M.D.C. parliamentarian and the party's shadow minister of justice. Coltart is the only white in the shadow cabinet, and he takes evident pride in the fact that the constituency that sent him to parliament is ninety-five per cent black. He had just come off a campaign swing, and was wearing a bulletproof vest, but he seemed less concerned by his personal danger than by the number of people he had encountered at his rallies who expressed a desire for revenge against ZANU-P.F. in the event of an M.D.C. victory. "What we face at many political meetings is people saying, 'Will you please just look the other way for forty-eight hours?'" he said, adding, "We simply can't start off in the same way that Mugabe left off."

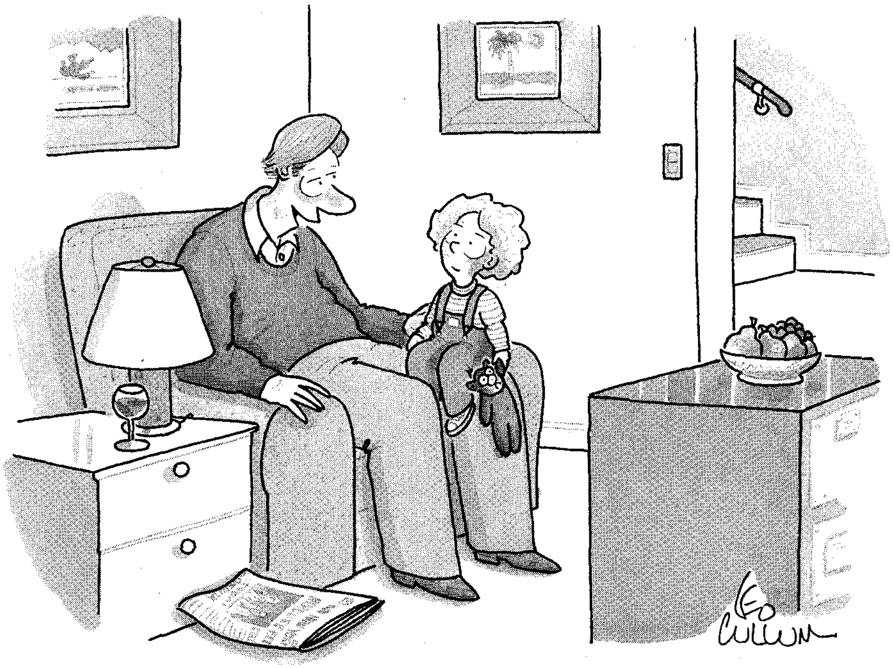
So far, M.D.C. supporters had, with relatively few exceptions, abided by the party's strict policy of nonviolence, and Coltart believed that revenge attacks could be prevented "if a firm clear message of change is articulated." Washington Sansole, a local black lawyer and an M.D.C. supporter, wasn't so sure. "The ordinary people who have been subjected to these beatings and intimidations—they are going to be thirsting for blood," he had told me. Paul Themba Nyathi, the M.D.C.'s shadow minister for local government, took a middle view. The appetite for revenge was great, but he said, "I think it can be prevented, because it comes from a sense of helplessness that makes people seek satisfaction by inflicting pain back on their tormentors. If we can give them some hope as an alternative to Robert Mugabe, who always built the country on hate, I think it's possible to keep from mayhem. But it's going to be very difficult."

"I don't get paid enough to speak up."

Coltart was busy designing a legal framework for an M.D.C. government to address the abuses of the old regime. Mugabe had always been a champion of amnesties and pardons; he had issued them in the name of "unity" after each phase of bloodshed in his political progress: at independence, following the Gukurahundi massacres in Matabeleland in the eighties, and after every national election in the past decade. Coltart was eager to bring this "culture of impunity" to an end, but he said, "Regarding Robert Mugabe himself, we've been placed under enormous pressure by the international community to insure that he is allowed to retire peacefully here." The international pressure came from other African countries. Tsvangirai had made it clear to Mugabe that he would be allowed to exit without humiliation, but Coltart remained troubled by the prospect of "a policy that results in relatively low-level people being prosecuted when the top architects go scot-free."

To address that tension, at least partially, Tsvangirai had promised to establish a truth commission. The idea, Coltart told me, was not only to hold hearings on the Mugabe era but to examine the country's vexed history all the way back to November 11, 1965, when Ian Smith issued a unilateral declaration of independence from the British Empire and declared a state of emergency, in a bid to preserve white rule forever. On that day, Coltart said, "The white government became illegal, and many of the crimes committed since then are better understood in that context." He felt that the time had come "to bring whites to speak and make whites reckon with their part in abuses."

Ian Smith, who is now eighty-three and still lives in Zimbabwe, is unrepentant for the brutality of his apartheid-style police state. At Oxford two years ago, he stated his position plainly: "The more we killed, the happier we were. We were fighting terrorists." Smith's undimmed extremism can seem like a template for Mugabe's own racist outbursts, but his defiant posture is almost universally reviled by the fifty thousand or so whites who have chosen to stay on in Zimbabwe. Indeed, everyone I spoke to—black and white—agreed that, despite Mugabe's best efforts, there is very little overt racial conflict in Zimbabwean life.



"Life has its seasons, Kaitlin. This is the baseball season."

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"The truth of the matter is that blacks know that whatever hardships have come about in the past twenty years have not come about because of whites," Washington Sansole said. "That race thing is a red herring." Coltart went further. He suggested that Mugabe's attacks on whites had actually served to make many whites feel more Zimbabwean than ever—albeit defensively. "That's been, I think, the miracle of what's happened in Zimbabwe," he said. "For twenty years, the vast majority of whites were completely disengaged from political life in the country and disengaged from the vast majority of black people. They lived in little white islands, and, quite frankly, I think racist beliefs were deeply rooted and remained unchallenged. The irony is it's taken this drama for people to realize that there are just some absolutely outstanding black people."

Certainly, it is a faith akin to Coltart's that had kept farmers like JoJo, and Richard Pascall, the rhinoceros rancher, on their occupied land, and dreaming of developing it further once Mugabe was gone. Down the road from Pascall's place, however, I met a couple whose farm had been so thoroughly pillaged by squatters that they had no hope of restoring it. They'd had no income for a year, and had just enough savings to keep themselves in Scotch whiskey until the election. The only reason they stayed on, they told me, was that they had nowhere to go. In anticipation of escalated violence in the event of a Mugabe victory, many farmers were sending their wives and children to safe houses in town, but this couple refused to consider such a separation. "I will never leave my husband. If he goes, I go," the woman told me, and the man said, "My wife doesn't shoot so good, but she's a helluva good loader."

If it came to such a battle, the couple had no doubt that they'd lose. But the fantasy of taking a stand was all they had left. "One thing Mugabe has done is teach people to hate," the woman said. "Forty years in this country, and even with that bloody war I didn't hate them. Now I hate them. I had two boys hanging off the back gate last week, begging for food. They were so bloody hungry—and I turned my back on them. I did, and it's a bloody shame, and it's Mugabe's prime achievement."

Mugabe is not one for admitting to error, but a week before the election he held a rally in Bulawayo, where he confessed to having made the great blunder of his political life, when, on assuming power in 1980, he gave his famous speech, seeking reconciliation with whites. "We made a mistake when we showed mercy," he said, adding that he had acted "as a fool" but was "wiser now." And, at his inauguration, two weeks later, he made sure not to repeat the mistake of magnanimity in victory, although he did offer Zimbabweans an opportunity to submit to his domination once again in the name of unity.

The election itself was a mockery, even by Africa's degraded standards. As many as a million potential voters had been systematically excluded by the government from voting, while voter rolls were inflated in ZANU-P.F. strongholds, and the violence and intimidation continued right through the balloting process: hundreds of opposition poll watchers were arrested, and hundreds more were beaten or otherwise physically prevented from going about their task. In the end, on March 13th, Mugabe claimed victory by a margin so preposterous that it was apparent his ballot-box stuffers had been overzealous, and only the most jaded and cynical of foreign observers—notably South Africa's mission, whose members seemed to have forgotten that they themselves had been assaulted during the campaign by ZANU-P.F. thugs—found qualified terms for approving the vote as free and fair enough.

"Well done, Zimbabweans. . . . We have dealt a stunning blow to imperialism!" Mugabe declared, as he promised to accelerate his land-redistribution program, and made special thanks to the African leaders who had stood by him in solidarity. The next morning, Zimbabwe awoke to the news that another white farmer had been shot dead by war veterans—this time on a farm that Mugabe's sister had been making moves to acquire—and the following afternoon the country was suspended from the British Commonwealth. In the weeks since the vote, Zimbabwe has fallen out of the international headlines, but it has not fallen quiet. If anything, the level of state-sponsored violence has escalated. M.D.C. activists and independent journalists are arrested almost daily, more than two hundred white farmers and twenty thousand black farmers have been expelled from commercial farmlands, food supplies have been kept from tens of thousands of people in areas that voted for the opposition, while thousands more have been displaced from their homes by the violent rampages of vengeful war veterans, police, and soldiers.

Not long ago, I received another e-mail from the wife of the businessman in Bulawayo. In earlier post-election messages, she had sounded depleted but upbeat, convinced that the outrageousness of Mugabe's victory, combined with the fact that change had to come someday, meant that change would still come sooner than later. Now she didn't sound so sure. Without preamble, she wrote:

> I WANT TO LIVE IN AFRICA, FUCK IT!!! The uncertainty of tomorrow and the broken dreams of what could be are soul destroying. In the meantime I've been on a rampage chucking out all unnecessary clutter, accumulated over seventeen years of life. Is this my subconscious speaking? How does one discard Ovid's "Metamorphoses"—1984, University, Professor Budick?!? I remember one of the farmers' wives saying she had twenty minutes to pack. She stood before her cupboard and finally left all but the photographs. That's all we need really.

She's still there, but a week later I received four e-mails at once from exactly the sort of farmer's wife she described—Carol Pascall, of Gourlays Ranch. The first e-mail said:

> The squatters disarmed us yesterday. They now have in their possession four shot guns, two .308 rifles, one .22, and one handgun. The police were notified and their reply was that they had no vehicle. We contacted them this morning once more and once more there is no vehicle available. Last night one of our sheep was slaughtered and a few more are running around with stab wounds. My daughter Juliet leaves for university in South Africa today. All that keeps me going is knowing that there are many people out there who are going through absolute horror, something I cannot even begin to imagine and I will not let evil rule the day. We need to make a stand.

The next e-mail said:

> As I sit and write this now, we are sitting a hundred and twenty kilometres from town, the police are not responding, and we have at least two hundred and fifty squatters, youths and war vets on the farm who are threatening to kill us. They have successfully chased away all our labor. They are at this very moment putting grass and branches around the compound houses in order to burn them down. The roads are barricaded. Please pray for us. I am sorry this is disjointed, but at this moment all I can think about is that we are most probably going to be killed tonight. Not a nice thought.

The third e-mail said:

> We had the remainder of the workers sleep in our house and cottage last night. We armed as many as possible and we all took it in turns to be on guard. The workers' houses were not burned down last night. This morning at first light we once more phoned the police for a reaction. They said at 5:30 this morning that they were coming, we are still waiting. In the meantime the remainder of the workers have left without their belongings as the squatters have forbidden them to take anything with them. We have been told that we must leave without anything. We are stalling for time, hoping and praying that the police will react. In the event that they do not, not only will we lose everything but the workers stand to lose all their worldly belongings as well. I wish I could describe the looks on their faces. . . . The roads are still barricaded and manned by the squatters. They have moved more people onto the farm. . . . Richard seems to be spending all his time puking his heart out. What do we do? . . . I believe that we must remain strong and remain here. . . . What started all of the nonsense is that we are a black-rhino conservancy. . . . A big bull died last week due to fighting, as the animals are now compressed into a small area and the bulls' areas are overlapping. We did what we were supposed to do according to the law and contacted a government vet and National Parks. The vet came out to ascertain the cause of death, and National Parks collected the horn. That was on Sunday. On Monday all hell broke loose as the squatters now decided that they own the rhino and they want the trophy fee for these animals and we should have consulted with them prior to calling the vet and National Parks.

The fourth e-mail said:

> The police arrived here and attempted to keep the peace. They said that they could not sort out this matter, as it is political. We need to talk to the local squatters, as this is where all land problems etc. are now sorted out. This came as a shock as this means that we no longer have a government or law and order. Some of the youths exposed themselves to my daughter and once more we are told it is political. The squatters and war vets are now running the country. We have managed to buy ourselves time and will be off the farm in seven days' time. All our workers have left. . . . I must admit that last night the demonic forces were tangible. Our lock and chain on our security gate has been stolen. . . . The squatters have told us that we are to hand all our weapons in to the local police. I do not feel safe about that. Today one of our horses came in with two cable snares around her neck. Another horse came in with evidence of having had a snare on her neck. This has all happened since Monday, as this is when our game guards were disarmed and called in. I shudder to think what will happen to the black rhino and game left on the farm.

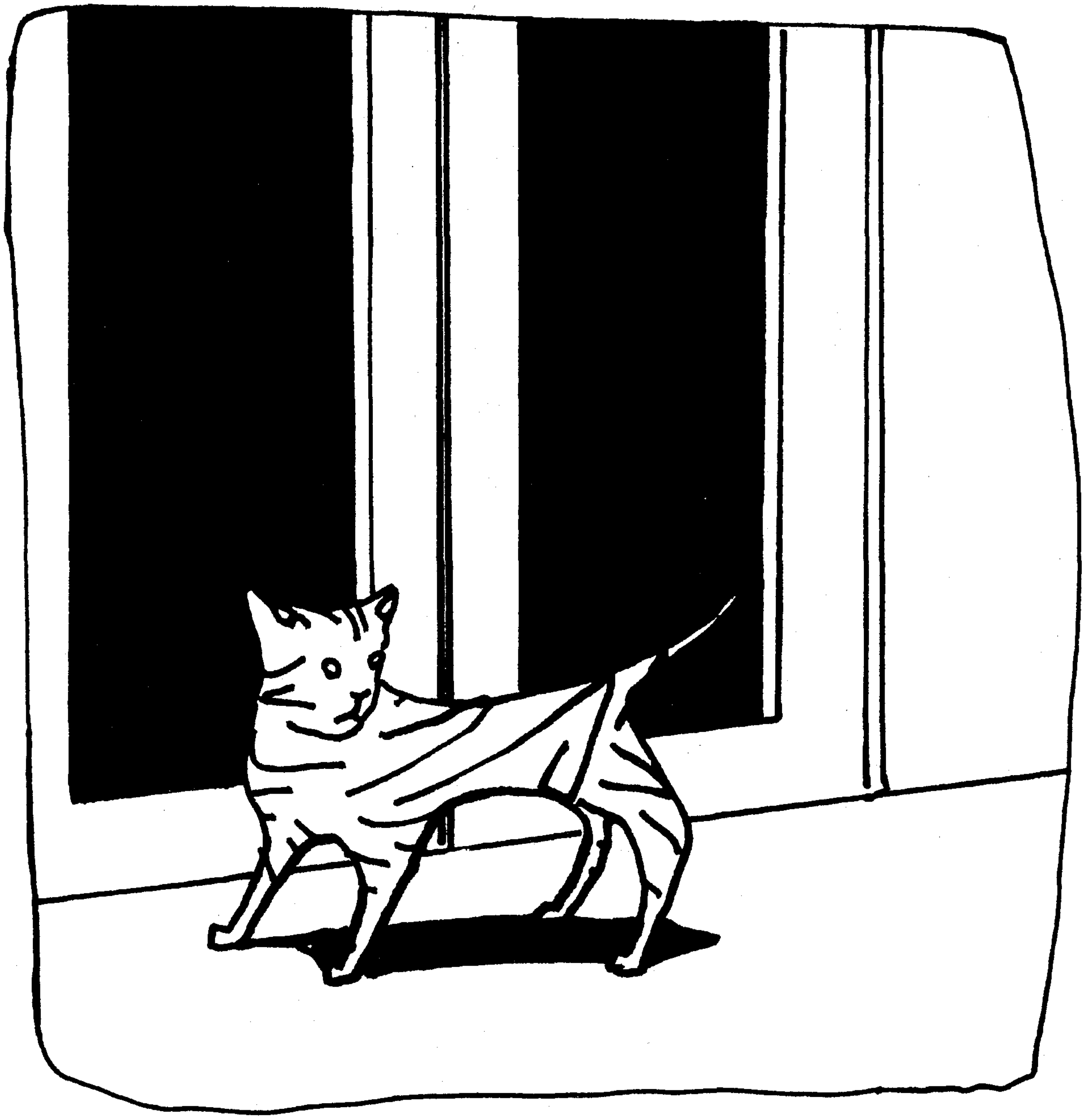
Beneath this last message, Carol Pascall had pasted an article by Chris McGreal, the *Guardian's* southern Africa correspondent. Under the headline "ZIMBABWE STRUCK BY NEW REIGN OF TERROR," he described the ordeal of a black woman near a town called Nembudziya, who had been taken from her home by a soldier. The soldier threatened to shoot her, but forced her instead to perform oral sex on him, while her two-year-old watched, then smacked her in the face with his pistol, and so on. McGreal provided a litany of such abuses, performed by soldiers on house-to-house rampages across Zimbabwe: "Six people have been murdered in political violence in Zimbabwe since the election, but a reluctance to kill outright—perhaps because torture and rape attract far less attention—is the only restraint shown by the troops and militia." Men, too, were forced to have sex with each other; others were branded with hot irons or hung upside down from trees. All of this had been going on before the election as well, and with the desired result: Mugabe had outpolled Tsvangirai in this district by two votes to one.

It struck me as remarkable that Carol Pascall, holed up in her farmhouse at her computer, with a mob raging at her gate, should have bothered to attach this story to her own. By comparison with what her black compatriots were suffering, her own plight seemed almost comprehensible, and that seemed to be exactly her point. ♦

SKETCHBOOK BY BRUCE ERIC KAPLAN

THE CAT THAT CHANGED MY LIFE

Six cats share their stories with the artist.



MISS PAMELA

Jersey City, New Jersey, February 6, 2001

You are like everyone else. You feel bad for me because I live on the streets. But my heart beats faster than yours does, and I have known greater joy and fear and love and hate. I would kill myself if I had to live in some depressing little suburban home, at the mercy of others all day and night.

I met my lover Glitter several years ago, and we have incredible sex. She and I tried having an exclusive relationship, but neither of us is the type. So sometimes we go for months without seeing each other, each of us prowling different parts of town.

But then one of us will send word to the other to meet at a designated parking structure, and we'll have a wild weekend of debauchery together. Glitter is really my best friend. I know if I'm in a pinch she'll be there for me. And vice versa. I don't need anything or anyone else, because I know I have Glitter.

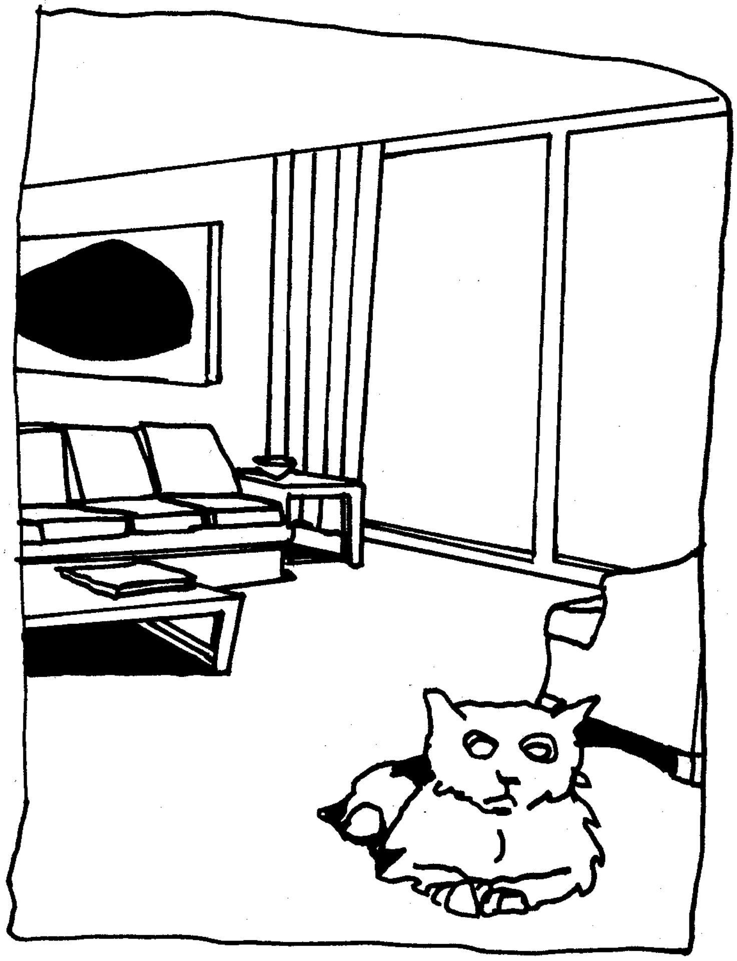
SYLVIO
Morristown, New Jersey, July 21, 1999

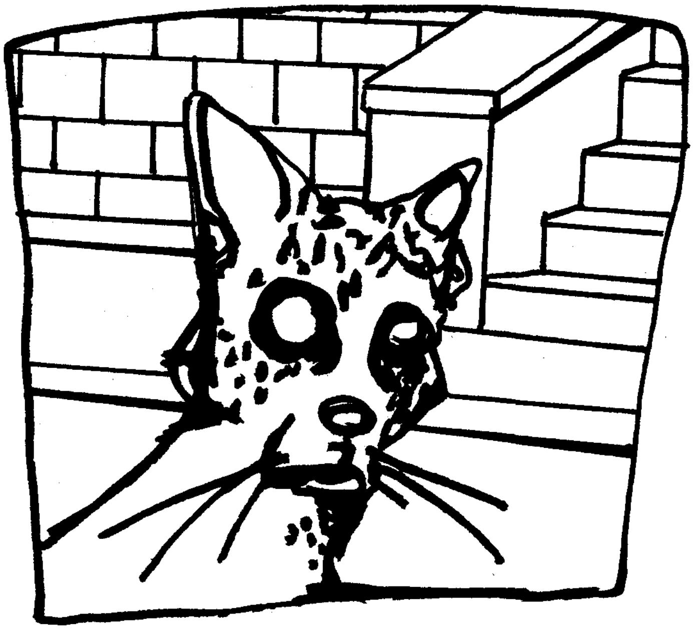
My friend Misty woke up one afternoon with a terrible itch on the side of her head, just below her ears. She rubbed this spot against furniture the whole rest of the day. Every time she took a nap, she thought she would wake up and it would be gone. But it never was. This went on for weeks.

Various remedies were tried, but none worked. Misty had a permanent itch, and she lived with it for years and years.

There were times when I would be troubled by a neighboring creature or I would have problems with my mate and I would feel sorry for myself. But in talking to Misty and watching her rub her head against whatever was handy, I would suddenly find myself able to look past my own petty concerns.

On the evening Misty passed, she was still rubbing away just as vigorously as the first day she got the itch. She had lived the vast majority of her life with a terrible itch. But the itch never got her down or kept her from doing anything. Many would have let the itch win, but she didn't.





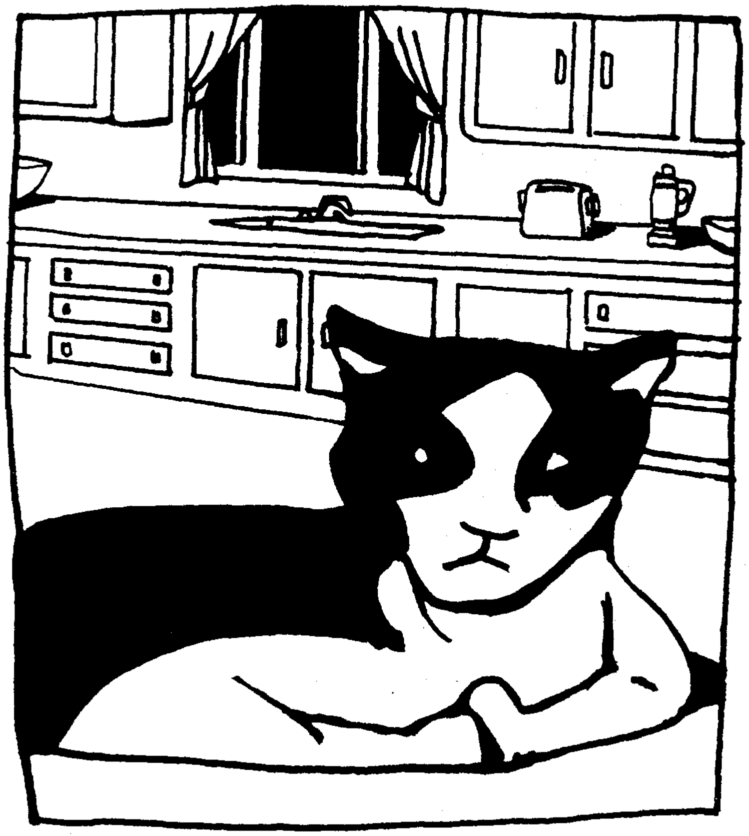
PHILLIE *Brooklyn, New York, October 27, 2001*

I was at a point in my life where I had all this crap I needed to deal with—stuff with my mother, all my old mates, my offspring. I would sit at home at night, and my head would pound as I thought about these things, until one time when I couldn't take it anymore and I bolted up and went out and hit the streets. A few minutes later, I found myself in an alley having sex with a stranger. And during those frenzied moments I forgot about anything else in my life.

Soon I was hitting the alleys every night. As the sun went down, I would be giddy with anticipation. When I went home each dawn, I was tired but exhilarated by the memories of that evening's random, furtive couplings.

Then, one night, I had sex with my seventh partner of the evening and got up to go home. She then said she wasn't going to let me leave her—I was all she had. I looked in her eyes and realized she was horribly mentally unstable, probably one of those cases you hear about who were thrown in drying machines at an early age. I edged away from her, but suddenly she started screaming obscenities and scratched and bit me all over. She tore my ear off before I was able to escape from her.

As the sun came up that morning, I lay in a gutter bleeding profusely. I knew I had come very close to being killed. That was the wake-up call I needed to go home and begin putting the shattered pieces of my life back together.



CRICKET

Massapequa, New York, November 11, 1999

This is a story about true bravery. I grew up in a home with thirty-six others. Everyone got along O.K. except for Frankie, who was a sadist. He delighted in torturing everyone, but in particular he picked on the smallest of us, Buttercup.

One hot summer day, Frankie was even meaner than usual, singling out Buttercup. When Frankie left the room, we all bitched about him, as we often did. But this time Buttercup didn't just moan about his fate. He went over to Frankie's favorite pillow and puked on it. We were nervous but elated by this small but daring act of rebellion.

A short time later, Frankie came back and sat in the puke. We laughed. Frankie made a face, smelled what he was sitting in, and immediately figured out what had happened. He viciously beat up Buttercup, who didn't care in the least.

This tiny gesture of revolt was the first step in a campaign that ended in Frankie's expulsion from the home. Buttercup taught all of us something important about how to make a difference.

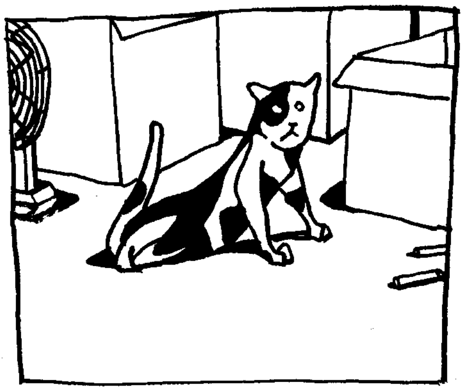
KNICKERS

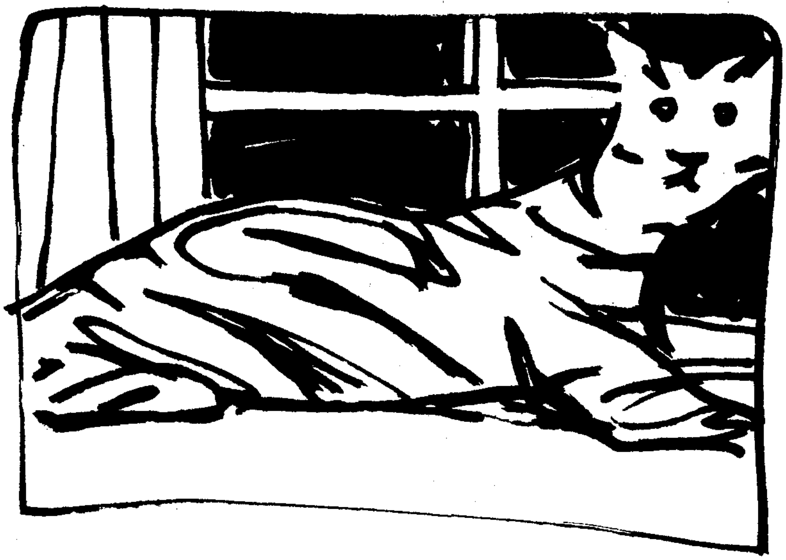
Fair Lawn, New Jersey, November 14, 1999

Lucille was a friend of my parents' who was in a bad relationship, so she spent a lot of time in our yard.

She was lonely and was of an age where she was starting to feel that she was no longer that attractive. I was young and confused about all the changes my body was going through.

We had a summer of illicit love, and then she went back to her mate. I became gay.





LUIS *Narragansett, Rhode Island, June 1, 2000*

I don't know her name. I call her Pretty. I noticed her the first day I moved to this house. She was sitting on the shelf in a back bedroom upstairs. She never moved from the spot. She is made out of glass. Next to her are some ugly pieces, but I don't even see them, not really.

I visit her often. I imagine conversations with her. It's odd, but, in a way, she has the best sense of humor of anyone I have ever met. No one makes me laugh like she does.

Every now and then, my feelings are so strong for her that I don't know how to handle it. I want to knock her off the shelf. After a while, I get a hold of myself and the feeling passes.

On some level, I know this is not healthy. But, at the same time, Pretty makes me happy like no one else does. She is perfect.

ANNALS OF SHOW BUSINESS

ISN'T IT WONDERFUL?

Tony Curtis sings and dances in "Some Like It Hot."

BY LILLIAN ROSS

From downtown Las Vegas, it takes about twenty minutes, driving on flat, freshly paved, blistering-hot freeways, to reach Tony Curtis's house. To get there, one drives south on Las Vegas Boulevard, escaping the bumper-to-bumper traffic of the Strip, where the persistent jangle of the casinos lingers in the air. Curtis lives in a practically treeless, odorless, sun-blazed suburb called Henderson, with his devoted thirty-two-year-old wife, the former Jill Ann VandenBerg, and seven small dogs, including Josephine, a Yorkie that, like the Josephine character Curtis played in Billy Wilder's 1959 movie "Some Like It Hot," is a male. The Curtises also have a couple of cats, including a fluffy white one named Marilyn.

For the past several months, Curtis, who has played more than a hundred and twenty roles in a career that spans fifty years, has been working and rehearsing at home, preparing to go onstage for the first time since he started making movies. He has been cast in the Joe E. Brown role of the old millionaire, Osgood Fielding III, in the forthcoming musical-theatre version of "Some Like It Hot." It will be his singing and dancing début. Before starting on a twenty-eight-city tour, which will wind up in Portland, Oregon, in about a year, the show is scheduled to open at the new Hobby Center for the Performing Arts, in Houston, on June 4th, one day after Curtis's seventy-seventh birthday.

"I'm going to have a piece of the profits from the show," Curtis said last month, with unconcealed delight. "I like the adventure of it—it means a lot to me." He speaks in a distinctive, rich-throated New Yorkese that moviegoers know well, and he is a bit hard of hearing in one ear. "All those years in movies with gunshots and explosions!" he said. Deeply suntanned, he has a thick, auburn-colored head of hair and is somewhat stouter and fuller of face than he was in his youth; otherwise he exudes the same overeager, innocent, unguarded persona of the characters he played in many of his movies.

The Curtises' house, a white stucco one-story Italian-Spanish ranch, stands on a half acre of precious, water-deprived land. Curtis shows the same undisguised affection for these digs that he shows for just about everything else in his life. He and Jill bought the house last year, had it modified to their specifications, and moved in last summer.

All of the houses in Curtis's colony look similar, arranged in a cozy huddle, but his seems to be the only one that has a front lawn, a four-by-four-foot patch on one side of the entry walk and a six-by-eight-foot patch on the other. The garage holds three convertibles, a canary-colored Porsche (Jill's) and two Trans Ams (Tony's). In the back of the house is a swimming pool, about twenty-five feet long and five feet deep, with a water-replacing vanishing edge. Also squeezed onto the half acre is a small house for the dogs, and an artist's studio for Curtis that is filled with dozens of his paintings, including many in Matisse-like colors and a large brown one of Curtis's hero, Muhammad Ali. In addition to easels, paints, and brushes, and a steadily increasing number of paintings, Curtis regularly creates scores of three-dimensional shadow boxes that he calls "my little touches of memory." Many of the boxes were previously host to cigars. He fills them with whatever odds and ends he can lay his hands on, such as dolls' heads or other toys discarded by his children when they were small. (He had six children, two each from three of his four previous wives, and he now has six grandchildren, whom he unabashedly adores.)

Jill, an accomplished horsewoman, grew up in San Diego. She is almost six feet tall and has straight, baby-blond hair, which she wears cut extremely short. She likes to collect things, too.

"This darling girl's great love is Marilyn Monroe," Curtis said proudly.

"I have half a dozen photos of Marilyn Monroe that are hard to find," Jill said modestly. "I have some from the nineteen-sixties, taken four or five weeks before she died. I found and bought them on eBay. Also on eBay I bought, for about twelve hundred dollars, a photograph of Jean Harlow with her autograph. It reads, 'Sincerely, Jean Harlow.' On the frame is a plaque saying 'The Blonde Bombshell. 1911-1937.' "

"That Marilyn!" Curtis said, hugging his wife. "She was like a naughty seven-year-old. She told Jack Lemmon, when we were making 'Some Like It Hot,' 'I love working with you, but not with Tony.' Then she told me, 'I love working with you, but not with Jack.' Then she told both of us she thought Billy had lost his touch. He called her the mean seven-year-old." Curtis gave a little smile. "I had a brief, sweet affair with Marilyn. When I first knew her, I was twenty-three. She was a year younger. We were two children wanting to be famous. We didn't know what we were doing. We were together for seven months. It was sweet and innocent, you know? We both had careers. Those early days were a very special time for me. I had a Buick convertible with Dynaflow. I drove with the top down. Embedded in my head is one day when I picked her up at the studio and drove her into town. I would look in the rearview mirror, which in those days was concave. It was one of those five-minute miracles. We looked at each other in the mirror as we drove, and we both

PHOTOGRAPHS BY GAIL ALBERT HALABAN

Curtis with his wife, Jill, and one of their seven dogs, at home, outside Las Vegas.

knew we were going to be"—he paused briefly—"successful."

When Curtis appraises his career as an actor, he becomes suddenly serious. Of all his movies—including "Houdini," "Trapeze," "Sweet Smell of Success," "Spartacus," "The Defiant Ones"—his favorite was "The Boston Strangler," which came out in 1968.

"Playing that murderer, Albert DeSalvo, was the greatest challenge, and so satisfying," he told me. Even today, he enjoys telephoning friends and greeting them by saying, "This is Albert DeSalvo."

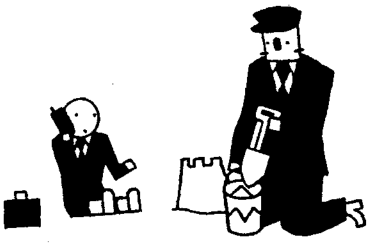
"I love it here in Vegas," Curtis went on. "I'm not bumming L.A. But L.A. is not for me. On a single movie set, you would have eighty workers. Some people would come to work with built-up anger and envy. And there's nothing I could do about it. A lot of them verbalized their anger. They didn't hit me, but I always felt afraid. I could never show my fear. They'd have killed me if I showed it."

Curtis said he used to hang out with Frank Sinatra, Tony Bennett, Dean Martin, and Sammy Davis, Jr., and he learned about singing from them. "But I was always afraid to open my mouth," he said. "All these people I listened to over the years impregnated me. What I learned from them stayed with me. I was afraid to dance, too. I loved the companionship of women, but in the old days I was always afraid.

"Life in L.A. was insular," Curtis continued. "I went to a psychiatrist out there for a couple of years, only because I needed someone to talk to. I enjoyed it. But my life is much bigger now. I'm thrilled to have a girl like Jill. She never gets impatient with me. She helps me. In learning my part for the show, she runs lines with me as Daphne, the one Osgood falls for. We came to Vegas on a vacation, and we never left. We got married here. I love Vegas. It's fun. It has uncomplicated money, and I like that. It allows you to be anyone you want to be. Here I don't feel afraid."

Last month, Curtis started working on the three songs and three dance numbers that he will do in the new production of "Some Like It Hot," which essentially tells the same story as the film—two musicians in 1929 disguised as women on the run from murderous Chicago gangsters. The stage version has a new book, written by Peter Stone; some old songs and some never-before-performed songs by the late Jule Styne, with lyrics by Bob Merrill; new dance music, composed for the show by Mark Hummel; and original choreography by the show's director, Dan Siretta.

"I want to bring everything I learned from the movies to this show, everything," Curtis said one morning in his living room, shortly before coming to New York for a month of rehearsals. "I've retained everything that I learned from my mentors, and now I feel free to use what they taught me. A lot of these guys treated me like a kid, and I liked that. But, in my own way, I was always building Tony Curtis. I feel so good now, living in Vegas and learning what I've got to do in the show."



The unrelenting sun outside the tall picture windows subtly threatened the room, which was cool and crammed with mementos: a couple of enormous silver champagne buckets, engraved with the words "Most Popular Star—Modern Screen Awards"; a solid-gold *Photoplay*-magazine medallion, three inches in diameter, "Presented on behalf of the American moviegoing public to Tony Curtis—most popular actor 1958"; a painting of an orange-and-yellow lady's boot, by Andy Warhol, entitled "The Some Like It Hot Shoe"; an elaborately tooled leather saddle, given to him by a cowboy friend; many family albums filled with photographs of attractive ex-wives, including his first, the "Psycho" star Janet

THE TWO

When he gets off work at Packard, they meet
outside a diner on Grand Boulevard. He's tired,
a bit depressed, and—smelling the exhaustion
on his own breath—he kisses her carefully
on her left cheek. Early April, and the weather
has not decided if this is spring, winter, or what.
The two gaze upward at the sky, which gives
nothing away: the low clouds break here and there
and let in tiny slices of a pure blue heaven.
The day is like us, she thinks; it hasn't decided
what to become. The traffic light at Linwood
goes from red to green and the trucks start up,
so that when he says "Would you like to eat?"
she hears a jumble of words that means nothing,
though spiced with things she cannot believe,
"wooden Jew" and "lucky meat." He's been up
late, she thinks, he's tired of the job, perhaps tired
of their morning meetings, but then he bows
from the waist and holds the door open
for her to enter the diner, and the thick
odor of bacon frying and new potatoes
greets them both, and taking heart she enters
to peer through the thick cloud of tobacco smoke
to see if "their booth" is available.
F. Scott Fitzgerald wrote that there were no
second acts in America, but he knew neither
this man nor this woman and no one else
like them unless he stayed late at the office
to test his famous one-liner "We keep you clean
in Muscatine" on the woman emptying

Leigh ("A real class act, beautiful and brilliant," Curtis says of her), and of handsome children, including the actress and children's-book author Jamie Lee Curtis.

his wastebasket. Fitzgerald never wrote
with someone present, except for this woman
in a gray uniform, whose comings and goings
went unnoticed, even on those December evenings
she worked late while snow fell silently
on the windowsill and the new fluorescent lights
blinked on and off. Get back to the two, you say.
Not who ordered poached eggs, who ordered
only toast and coffee, who shared the bacon
with the other but what became of the two
when this poem ended, whose arms held whom,
who first said "I love you" and truly meant it,
and who misunderstood the words, so longed
for, and yet still so unexpected, and began
suddenly to scream and curse until the waitress
asked them both to leave. The Packard plant closed
years before I left Detroit, the diner was burned
to the ground in '67, two years before my oldest son
fled to Sweden to escape the American dream.
"And the lovers?" you ask. I wrote nothing about lovers.
Take a look. Clouds, trucks, traffic lights, a diner, work,
a wooden shoe, Muscatine, poached eggs, the perfume
of frying bacon, the chaos of language, the spices
of spent breath after eight hours of night work.
Can you hear all I feared and never dared to write?
Why the two are more real than either you or me,
why I never returned to keep them in my life,
how little I now mean to myself or anyone else,
what any of this could mean, where you found
the patience to endure these truths and confusions?

—*Philip Levine*

Curtis, wearing white tennis shorts, a white tank top, and brown Birkenstocks, got ready for his regular, hour-long morning session with his vocal coach. He picked up some song sheets from a stack on top of an upright piano. Colorful Curtis paintings stood against the walls and furniture or lay on the floor, because, Curtis explained, he doesn't believe in making holes in the walls to hang them.

"I'm going to play my millionaire different from Joe E. Brown's in the movie," he said. "I don't want people to be thinking of Joe E. Brown when they see me.

"I had many mentors who prepared me for this," he went on. "My mentors were nice to me. Larry Olivier was very kind and very generous. He helped me be what I had to be in 'Spartacus'; there I was, yours truly, scrubbing him down and massaging his back in the bath scene, where he's telling me, 'I love both oysters and snails.' Wasn't that wonderful?" He burst into an appreciative guffaw and then said, "It was Olivier who told me the most important thing I had to know for acting. He said, 'Clothes make the man, dear boy' "—Curtis did an impressive Olivier accent—" 'Just put on the clothes, Tony, and look at yourself; you'll know what to do,' he would say. I've been very careful with my clothes ever since. I've got to choose what I'll wear in the show, when I get to New York. For here, I've got this, my millionaire's yachting cap." With a big grin, he clapped the cap on his head.

"Billy Wilder was one of my mentors," Curtis said. "He was first-rate. But I was never completely at ease with him. Something about him made me nervous. I was always afraid of him. He was quirky. He was mean. As a little kid, growing up in the poor neighborhoods in New York, I learned you've got to be careful of everybody. That's what growing up in New York teaches you."

Curtis was born Bernard Schwartz, in the Bronx in 1925, the son of a Hungarian tailor. "We were very poor, but, oh, boy, was my dad a snappy dresser!" Curtis said. "And he had a tattoo on his shoulder that showed an eagle, with a ribbon in its claws, and on it the saying 'Knowledge Is Power.' "

As a child, Curtis spoke Hungarian at home, and he didn't learn English until he was almost five, when he went to school. He still loves to speak Hungarian. A few weeks ago, when the Hungarian director George Sidney lay dying, Mrs. Sidney put Curtis on the phone with him. "I talked to him in Hungarian, telling him how much I loved him," Curtis said.

Curtis and his parents and his two brothers lived in back of the tailor's shop. "We kept moving, from one poor neighborhood to another," Curtis said. "When I started school, when I went out in the streets, the tough guys would chase me and beat me up. So I learned how to run, to run fast. I learned you've got to be careful of people.

"So I was afraid of Billy Wilder. I didn't want him popping me all the time. I was wild. I was like that. He wanted to know all about the girls. He wanted to know about the sex. Maybe he was a little jealous of me. I told him things he wanted to know, but still I was afraid.

"At the same time, I learned from him," Curtis said. "He taught me how to do the quick response. If you overlap each other's dialogue, it moves the action along faster. Don't wait, talk right away. In the movie, I ask Jack Lemmon, 'Why would a guy want to marry a guy?' 'Security!' Jack replies. Fast. Like that. Don't wait to get a laugh. The quick response. Billy Wilder loved it."

Curtis went on, turning serious. "It helped me understand something terrible Billy did to me. I lost one of my boys, Nicholas, to drugs. He was twenty-three. A week or so later, I went to Spago. I saw Billy Wilder, and I went over to his table and knelt down next to where he was sitting. I said quietly to him, 'My son Nicholas died of an overdose of heroin.' His reply was fast. 'He learned it from you,' he said. I was deeply hurt. But I made myself forgive him. I understood it was something he couldn't help. He was so steeped in the quick response.

"Burt Lancaster was a mentor to me, too. He treated me like a professional, in 'Sweet Smell of Success' and 'Trapeze,' " Curtis said. "Burt Lancaster treated me real nice. He acted professionally with me, so he got me to do it with him. I was never afraid of him. It was Cary Grant who taught me, when we made 'Operation Petticoat'—'It's got to be artless, Tony, artless.' " He did a great Cary Grant imitation and laughed. "Cary Grant and I got to be good friends," he said. "He saw in me something that appealed to him. I told him how the whole reason I quit school and went into the Navy when I was a teen-ager was because of him."

As a child living in the Bronx, Curtis saw "Destination Tokyo," with Grant as the submarine captain, standing in the tower, looking through the periscope. Curtis became a signalman on a submarine tender, and in 1945 he watched the Japanese surrender in Tokyo Bay. After the war, he enrolled at Erwin Piscator's Dramatic Workshop, at the New School, with the help of the G.I. Bill. His classmates included Walter Matthau and Bea Arthur, but Curtis was the first of them to go to Hollywood.

"All I wanted then was to be a movie star. I told all that to Cary Grant, and he wasn't afraid to show his feelings," Curtis said. "He'd say, 'Tony, Tony, Tony.' " (Curtis did another impressive imitation.) "Like that." He went on, "When Cary Grant said, 'Tony, I'll never grow old on the screen,' I said, 'I won't, either.' And I won't. Going on the stage is different. You're alive, right there, in front of everybody."

He paused. "I never took it for granted. I never take anything for granted. Whatever I've done, whatever I do now, I consider a privilege. When I made 'The Defiant Ones,' with Sidney Poitier, they wanted to bill me above the title and to bill him below. Up to that point, no black actor had ever been billed above the title. I said we were both the same. I said they should put our names up there together. Equal billing. And that's what they did."

Curtis, standing in his living room holding sheet music, grinned as Jill entered. She was barefoot and wore a blue floral-patterned sarong. She plumped down, cross-legged, on the floor, cuddling a couple of dogs. Marilyn, the cat, wandered in and sat down beside her.

The vocal coach arrived—a cheerful fellow named Clito Piermarini, who wore wire-rimmed spectacles, a small gray goatee, and a tiny gold piano on his left earlobe. Three nights a week, he sings at the Venetian hotel. "I'm in an old Venetian costume," he said. "I stroll around in the hotel's St. Mark's Square, and around the Canal, playing the accordion, singing requests like 'O Sole Mio' and Musetta's waltz from Puccini's 'La Bohème.' "

"Pier, you know I don't just want to be in this show because I'm a celebrity," Curtis said, as the teacher sat down at the upright. "I've got to sing. I'm so happy to sing!" Curtis spread his arms wide, and in an unrestrained baritone sang a couple of lines from one of his songs: "I fall in love too easily, I fall in love too fast. . . ." Piermarini, nodding encouragement, pounded out accompanying chords on the piano. Curtis gave a quick laugh and sang on: "I fall in love too terribly hard, for love to ever last. . . ."

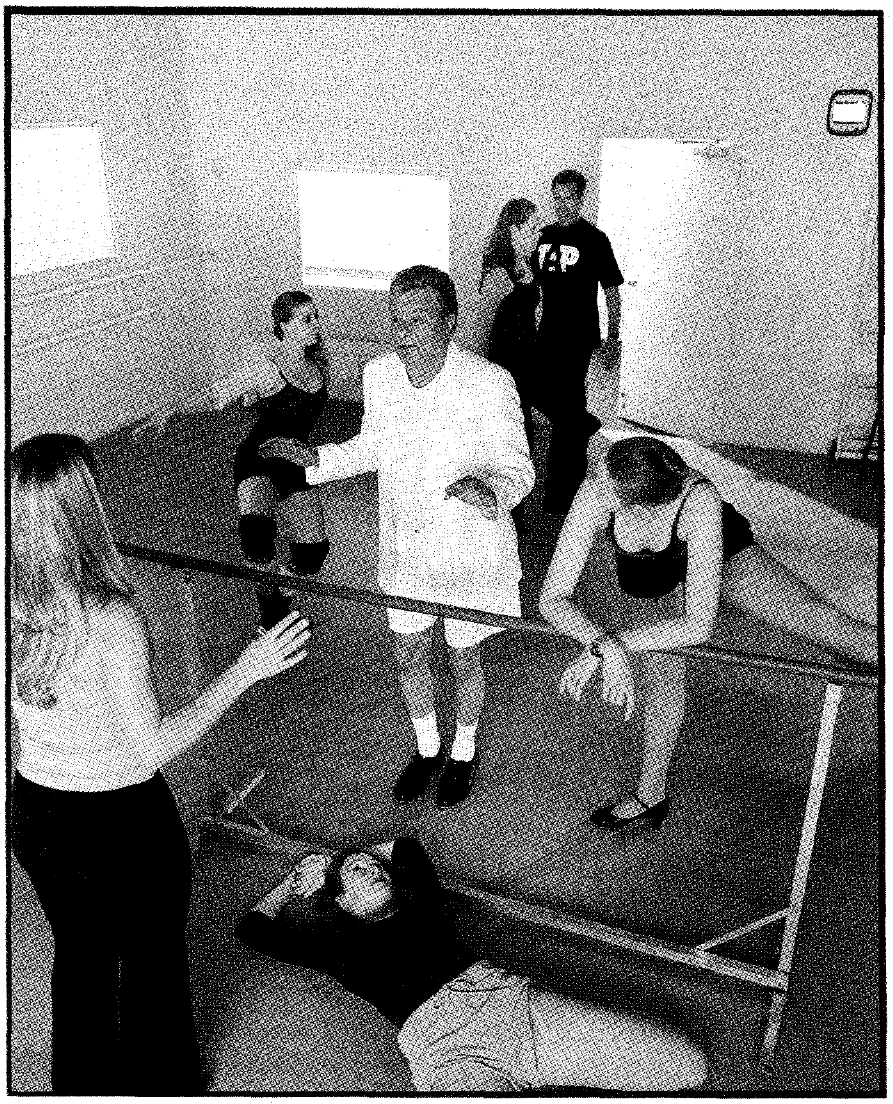
A little mutt entered and began barking shrilly.

"Shut up! I'm singing!" Curtis yelled.

Jill grabbed the barker and quieted him. "This one is Schwartz, after Tony's real name," she said.

Curtis grinned. "Sinatra always called me Bernie," he said, and laughed. "Sinatra was an intriguing man. He was very set in his thinking. Very angry. Where it came from I'm not sure. But he treated me nice. Someone asked him, 'Who's your favorite actor?' Frank said, 'Tony Curtis. Because he made it against all odds. He broke the fucking arts.' "

Curtis looked through his script and said that, as the millionaire Osgood



Curtis at a dance class: "Cary Grant taught me, 'It's got to be artless, Tony, artless.' "

CORBIS SABA

Fielding III, he would be on the hotel veranda with Sugar (the character played by Marilyn Monroe in the film).

"Then I'll be singing 'I Fall in Love Too Easily.' But I've got to bring my own style to it, bring my own signature, the way the great singers do," Curtis said. "Am I getting it right?" he asked the coach. "I fall in love too easily," he sang again, in a full, rich voice.

"Right! Fabulous!" Piermarini called out, in accents reminiscent of Robert De Niro. "You've got a great voice, no question."

Curtis nodded. "Paul McCartney told me, 'Don't worry; just tell the story.' He told me, 'God likes you when you smile; God loves you when you sing.'

"I want to leave part of me open so the director can give me *his* feeling," Curtis said. "I've come a long way, getting ready for this show. I lost weight. Fifteen pounds. I'm now down to a hundred and eighty. I exercise by doing what I like to do. I swim twice a day. Jillie and I go out disco dancing at least three nights a week. The disco Light, at the Bellagio, is our home away from home."

Curtis said that he wanted to work on "The November Song." "That's when Osgood sees Jerry dressed as Daphne and starts making passes at her. I want to make him different from Joe E. Brown's Osgood. Brown was an extraordinary comedian. But I want to make my Osgood frivolous, very extravagant. Billy Wilder wanted a more graphic millionaire, with a lot of old millionaires in rocking chairs, not good for anything anymore. I want my Osgood to be freer, looser, more like a little kid playing." He made silly gestures with his hands, like a little kid.

"Joe E. Brown himself was very penurious, very tight," Curtis went on. "Jack Lemmon and I used to joke about the way he never went for the tab. He was stingy with everything. He wouldn't ever ad-lib. Let's go, Pier. Let's work on 'The November Song.' "

Curtis sang:

You can call it madness if you're so inclined
But though we're somewhat older we are
still not blind
And if we still go frantic for a sweet behind
Even naughty old men need love.

"Great job," Piermarini said. "One thing, about the timing. Go slow. Talk it in the beginning. Ad-lib it."

Curtis grinned and did the song again. "And this is where I go into a dance routine with the other millionaires," he said. He did a little shuffle and sighed. "That's gonna be nice, eh?" he said. "I want to be like the bow of a ship, making my own way, cutting the stream."

For dinner, Curtis and Jill often head for the Bellagio hotel, which has an elegant restaurant called Picasso, where eleven original Picassos, along with more than eighty security cameras, look down from the walls at the diners.

One evening last month, Curtis and Jill set out for Picasso. He was wearing a black Armani suit and a white satin shirt. Jill had on a pair of Manolo Blahniks with four-inch heels and a very short, strapless, silk print dress that had been made to order to highlight her ample figure. They took a slow, regal stroll to the restaurant, where they got a splendid royal greeting. "It's such a privilege to eat here," Curtis said. After dinner, they ambled through the hotel's huge lobby. Every now and then, Curtis was stopped for an autograph request.

"People in their twenties recognize him," Jill said serenely, while Curtis graciously signed for a group of giggling young tourists wearing shorts. As the Curtises continued strolling toward the Bellagio's disco, a gray-haired gentleman with a heavy North London accent ran after them and said, breathlessly, "I just wanted to tell you that my friends and I all copied your hair. We were mad about your hair!"

"Yeah!" Curtis said, with an all-out laugh. "Full in the back, duck's ass, and in the front, the high pompadour. It was right after World War II. Everybody else was into crewcuts. But we wanted to make a statement."

At one point, Curtis paused in front of a bank of elevators. A very stout, handicapped young man in a wheelchair sped out and halted quickly in front of Curtis, who immediately put out his hand and offered it to the young man, who smiled hesitantly and then shook hands.

"Good to see you, sir!" Curtis said exuberantly. Without being asked, he reached into his pocket, took out a scrap of paper, and scribbled a greeting and his signature on it. The young man, who had trouble speaking, managed to say thank you.

"I lock eyes with everybody," Curtis said later. "I like being seen."

Before he came to New York last month to rehearse with the cast, Curtis would work on his dancing three afternoons a week with Scott Burrell, a good-natured tap dancer with thinning hair who performs in many of the Las Vegas shows. He had been hired to dance in the chorus of "Some Like It Hot," and he was teaching Curtis to tap-dance. Curtis, wearing his white shorts, put on white socks and a scuffed pair of old black tap shoes. They worked in a studio, a few miles from Curtis's house, outfitted with barres and mirrored walls. They practiced, accompanied by a recording of dance music that included songs by Janet Jackson and Harry Connick, Jr.

"Let's go with the basics," Burrell said. "The way you did it the other day. Here we go. Step, shuffle, ball, change." Curtis imitated him. "Good, good," Burrell said. "I grew up with Jerome Robbins and Bob Fosse, and that's what I love. That's what the show is going to have. Wonderful, choreographed, traditional tap. There you go, Tony!"

Curtis did some routines with Burrell, looking down at his feet as, somewhat hesitantly, he tapped out waltz clogs. "We'll be doing this with the millionaires, right, Scott?" he said, rather winded, after going the length of the studio and back doing waltz clogs.

"Very good," Burrell said. "With the older men, there'll be some soft shoe. Step and touch, backslide front, hold." He illustrated. Curtis imitated him. "Good," Burrell said. "You're developing body memory."

After an hour of drills, Curtis did shuffle, shuffle, slap, slap. He did step and touch, backslide front, and hold. Dancing, he looked less hesitant, albeit a mite stiff. He had some trouble not looking down at his feet. At the end of the session, Burrell told Curtis that he was doing great, and promised that by the time they got to the New York rehearsals he would have it all down pat.

Curtis looked pleased. In what his voice teacher called his "nice, deep baritone," he sang out:

We cannot hope for youth or for a crown
of curls
But naughty old men need naughty young
girls!

He laughed and went off, he said, to buy seven old-fashioned steamer trunks—one of which he was going to fill with his easel, paints, brushes, and a set of tools for working on his boxes—to pack and take to New York. He said he was also going to buy a new pair of black tap shoes.

Meanwhile, in Manhattan the show's producers, Jeffrey Spolan and Diane Masters, were impatiently awaiting the arrival of Tony Curtis. They live and work together in a twenty-second-floor apartment in a new Hell's Kitchen building along the West Side Highway. They had never produced a show of any kind before this one. Their resemblance to the Mickey Rooney-Judy Garland template of 1939 is barely discernible, but the spirit of it flickers. Spolan and Masters are both in their fifties. He is tall, with a boyish face; she is short, with a hoarse, authoritative voice. Masters was for many years a press agent for Off Broadway shows. Spolan has been an actor, promoter, producer, manager, investor, backer, and holder of odd jobs in the entertainment business all across the country. Each often steps on the other's lines but tries, diplomatically, to back off.

"We dated twenty-five years ago, and it didn't take," Spolan told me the other day in their apartment. "We dated eighteen years ago, and it didn't take. Three years ago, we started dating again. This time, it took. It's because this time we're working together on 'Some Like It Hot.' "

"It holds us together," Masters said.

The third occupant of the apartment is a white West Highland white terrier called Nicki, named after Masters's father. "The husbands came and went, but the dog stayed," Masters said.

"It took about two years to get to where we are now, working some days around the clock," Spolan said.

"I've always been a creative person," Masters added.

"It started with her," Spolan said. "It was always her idea to get Tony Curtis for the Joe E. Brown part."

"Jeffrey and I are on the same wavelength," Masters said.

"Every night, we say to each other—" Spolan paused and indicated to Masters that he was throwing her a cue.

"It's just you and me, kid," they said together.

Two years ago, they learned that the rights to the 1972 David Merrick-produced musical "Sugar," which was based on "Some Like It Hot," were available. They applied for the rights to the script and for the use of the title "Some Like It Hot." They secured the coöperation of Peter Stone, who revised the "Sugar" script. They enlisted Dan Siretta as director and choreographer and got help from the widows of Jule Styne and Bob Merrill in finding new songs that might be used in the show. They started thinking about casting.

"Diane said 'Tony Curtis' right away," Spolan said, pointing to his partner.

"But I said, 'He'll never do it; why would he want to do it?' " Masters said. "Then we went to Atlantic City to see Debbie Reynolds do her one-woman stage show."

"This is the best part of the story," Spolan said.

"It was my birthday—July, 2000. He bought me a classy black suit in Atlantic City," Masters said. "We told Debbie Reynolds we were getting ready to do a workshop of the show. I told her that I wanted Tony Curtis for the millionaire. Debbie Reynolds said, 'Call him. What else has he got to do—paint? Tell him to get off his ass!' "

"Back in New York, we called his lawyer," Spolan said.

Masters said, "Forty-eight hours later, his lawyer called. Tony's answer: 'Absolutely.' He signed up for two years, with an option to do a third. Now he sings to me over the phone. He sings 'I Fall in Love Too Easily,' his favorite."

"Revivals are what makes the bucks these days," Spolan said.

"Everybody is afraid of new stuff," Masters said.

"He's going to play Tony when he plays Osgood," Spolan said. "We want Tony to put Tony in Osgood."

"People love Tony, and he loves them back," Masters said. "That's all we want from Tony."

A couple of weeks later, Curtis and Jill were ensconced in the New York Palace Hotel, with the seven steamer trunks and two of their dogs. He had had his hair radically barbered and dyed white, for his part, and he had met with the director/choreographer, the music director, and other key people he would be working with.

"Everybody is so nice to me," he said. "The enjoyment of the experience is giving me a lot of energy. I like the adventure of it."

Rehearsals were due to start in a few days, at a studio in Chelsea, with the principal actors. "It's a lot of pressure, but the people from the show do everything for me," Curtis said. "And they're happy and smiling, without any anger. A cap came loose on one of my teeth. They immediately found a dentist for me who fixed it. I had a complete physical exam. It came out perfect. There's chaos. But I had a few minutes to work on a song with the music director. So now he can give me his *feeling* for how I should do the songs. They rush me from one thing to another! Thirty people! It's all gonna come together in two weeks to make a musical!"

The day after Curtis's arrival in New York, he made a personal appearance at the Film Forum, a West Village revival movie house that was showing a double feature of "Sweet Smell of Success" and "Some Like It Hot." The Curtises got all dolled up, he in the black Armani and white satin shirt and she in a strapless black gown and high-heeled slippers. The sold-out crowd was made up of scruffy cinephiles. Nevertheless, a frantic, Cannes-like atmosphere pervaded the unglamorous venue. Curtis even had his own unofficial P.R. adviser in attendance—Gary Hill, a young fast-talker with hair reaching to his shoulders who had named his business Falco Ink, in homage to Curtis's press-agent character in "Sweet Smell of Success." Photographers, camera lights, and tape-recorder-armed gossip reporters surfaced and buzzed around the Curtises. Struggling, they made their way into the dark theatre.

After the closing credits of "Sweet Smell of Success" rolled, a young man in a business suit announced, "Ladies and gentlemen, Tony Curtis!" Gasps and a long, sincere ovation from the audience. Curtis moved to the front of the theatre.

"I used to go to school around the corner down here on the Lower East Side," he told the crowd. "I used to be beaten up by the gangs here. I escaped. All I wanted was to be a movie star.

What a privilege it was to be in the movie you just saw. There's a bit of me in Sidney Falco. He was just a guy trying to make it. I don't think Sidney Falco should die at the end of this movie. He should get on the bus and go back to the Bronx, cleansed. So here I am now, the son of a poor Hungarian tailor. Isn't it wonderful?" The audience applauded.

A few days later, at the first full-cast rehearsal of "Some Like It Hot," Curtis got to work with Dan Siretta. Siretta started in musicals in 1959, when he danced in the chorus of "Fiorello!" For the rehearsal, he wore a black sports shirt under a larger black button-down shirt, black pants, and tan-colored tap shoes.

After watching from the sidelines as Siretta rehearsed some numbers without him, Curtis ran through what would be the finale with the full company. During the tap dancing, he looked down at his feet occasionally, but then, when Siretta placed him, arms linked and centered in a line with two pretty girls in the chorus, he tapped and sang unself-consciously:

Our deepest desire's
To sing in a choir
But we're on the spot
Some like it hot! . . .
I like it
You like it
Everybody likes it
Some like it hot!

Curtis tapped and kicked, his brow damp and his breath quick; but, holding on to the arms of the girls, he looked like he was having a good time.

"He's getting there," Siretta said to Scott Burrell, Curtis's dance coach. "He just needs to get a little more secure."

Next, Curtis watched as Siretta rehearsed William Ryall, a tall, experienced dancer, who is to play Spats, the gangster (the George Raft part in the film).

"We really follow the story just as it is in the movie," Siretta said. "I've wanted to do this show for ten years. The Wilder-Diamond script is my bible."

Curtis watched Spats lead his gangsters in a menacing tap dance as they set out to find Jerry and Joe, the two musicians, dead or alive.

"Spats kills people with his feet," Siretta said. "He shoots people with his feet." He did some heavy rat-a-tat-tat taps to illustrate.

Curtis, from the side, looked delighted. "Aren't these people wonderful?" he said.

"The first time out there, you did it all just perfect," Burrell said to Curtis, looking with approval at his new black tap shoes. "I feel like a proud dad."

Siretta joined them. "You get it," he told Curtis. "All you need is a few repetitions. When you sing 'The November Song,' we'll have all the other millionaires moving around in rocking chairs on wheels."

Curtis slapped his knee and spontaneously sang out:

I've had me moments
I've tasted some life
Ev'ry Christmastime a diff'rent wife
One was a gypsy and on the Q.T.
One was a partridge
In a pear tree.

A few afternoons later, Masters and Spolan showed up at a rehearsal. Siretta looked surprised to see them; producers don't generally sit in on rehearsals. Nevertheless, he rehearsed a couple of dance numbers that included Curtis, who tap-danced without once looking down at his feet. He wound up kicking and laughing, showing no signs of being out of breath. At the end, everybody applauded.

"Thanks, guys," Curtis said.

"See?" Masters said to Spolan. "See, I was right!"

"You were right," Spolan said. "You were right."

With about a week of rehearsals left, Siretta ran through "The November Song" with Curtis. Jill held up cue cards for her husband, marked with bits of lyrics. He talked part of the song and ad-libbed, obviously enjoying himself.

When he finished, he looked questioningly at Lynn Crigler, the music director.

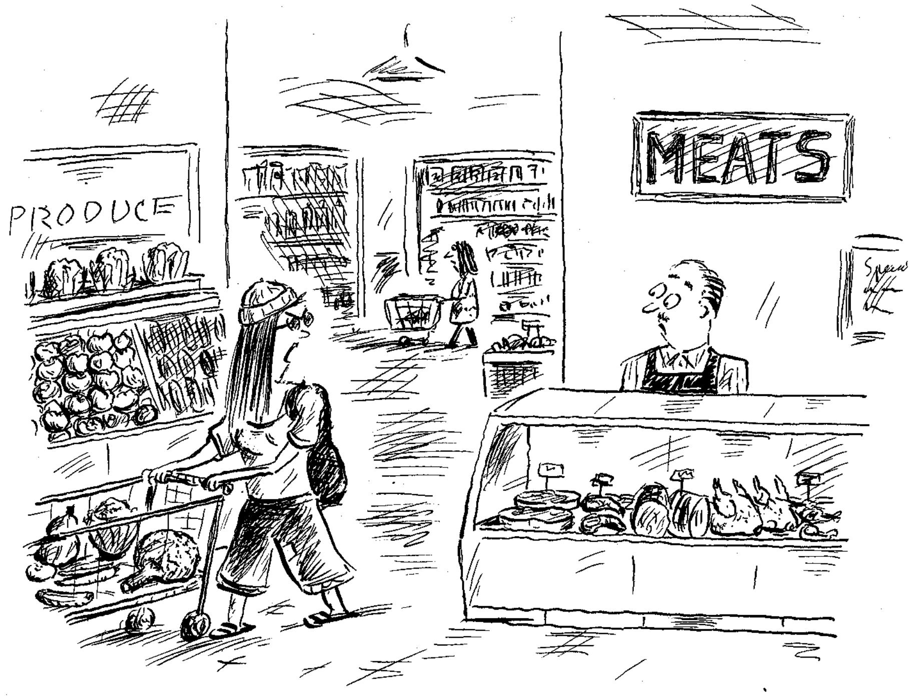
"You've got perfect pitch," Crigler said. "You don't go flat. You sing it as though you wrote it."

"You understand it," Siretta said. "Maurice Chevalier could understand it and do it. For me, Jimmy Durante did it the best when he sang 'As Time Goes By.' Now you're doing it."

"This is exciting. You're making it artless for me," Curtis said.

He held up his hands, intertwined his fingers, and shook his head. With a mischievous smile, he went over to Siretta and kissed him on the mouth.

"I'm beginning to think I can do this," Curtis said. ♦



"Butcher!"

FICTION

THE THING IN THE FOREST

BY A. S. BYATT

There were once two little girls who saw, or believed they saw, a thing in a forest. The two little girls were evacuees, who had been sent away from the city by train, with a large number of other children. They all had their names attached to their coats with safety pins, and they carried little bags or satchels, and the regulation gas mask. They wore knitted scarves and bonnets or caps, and many had knitted gloves attached to long tapes that ran along their sleeves, inside their coats, and over their shoulders and out, so that they could leave their ten woollen fingers dangling, like a spare pair of hands, like a scarecrow. They all had bare legs and scuffed shoes and wrinkled socks. Most had wounds on their knees in varying stages of freshness and scabbiness. They were at the age when children fall often and their knees were unprotected. With their suitcases, some of which were almost too big to carry, and their other impedimenta, a doll, a toy car, a comic, they were like a disorderly dwarf regiment, stomping along the platform.

The two little girls had not met before, and made friends on the train. They shared a square of chocolate, and took alternate bites at an apple. Their names were Penny and Primrose. Penny was thin and dark and taller, possibly older, than Primrose, who was plump and blond and curly. Primrose had bitten nails, and a velvet collar on her dressy green coat. Penny had a bloodless transparent paleness, a touch of blue in her fine lips. Neither of them knew where they were going, nor how long the journey might take. They did not even know why they were going, since neither of their mothers had quite known how to explain the danger to them. How do you say to your child, I am sending you away, because enemy bombs may fall out of the sky, but I myself am staying here, in what I believe may be daily danger of burning, being buried alive, gas, and ultimately perhaps a gray army rolling in on tanks over the suburbs? So the mothers (who did not resemble each other at all) behaved alike, and explained nothing—it was easier. Their daughters, they knew, were little girls, who would not be able to understand or imagine.

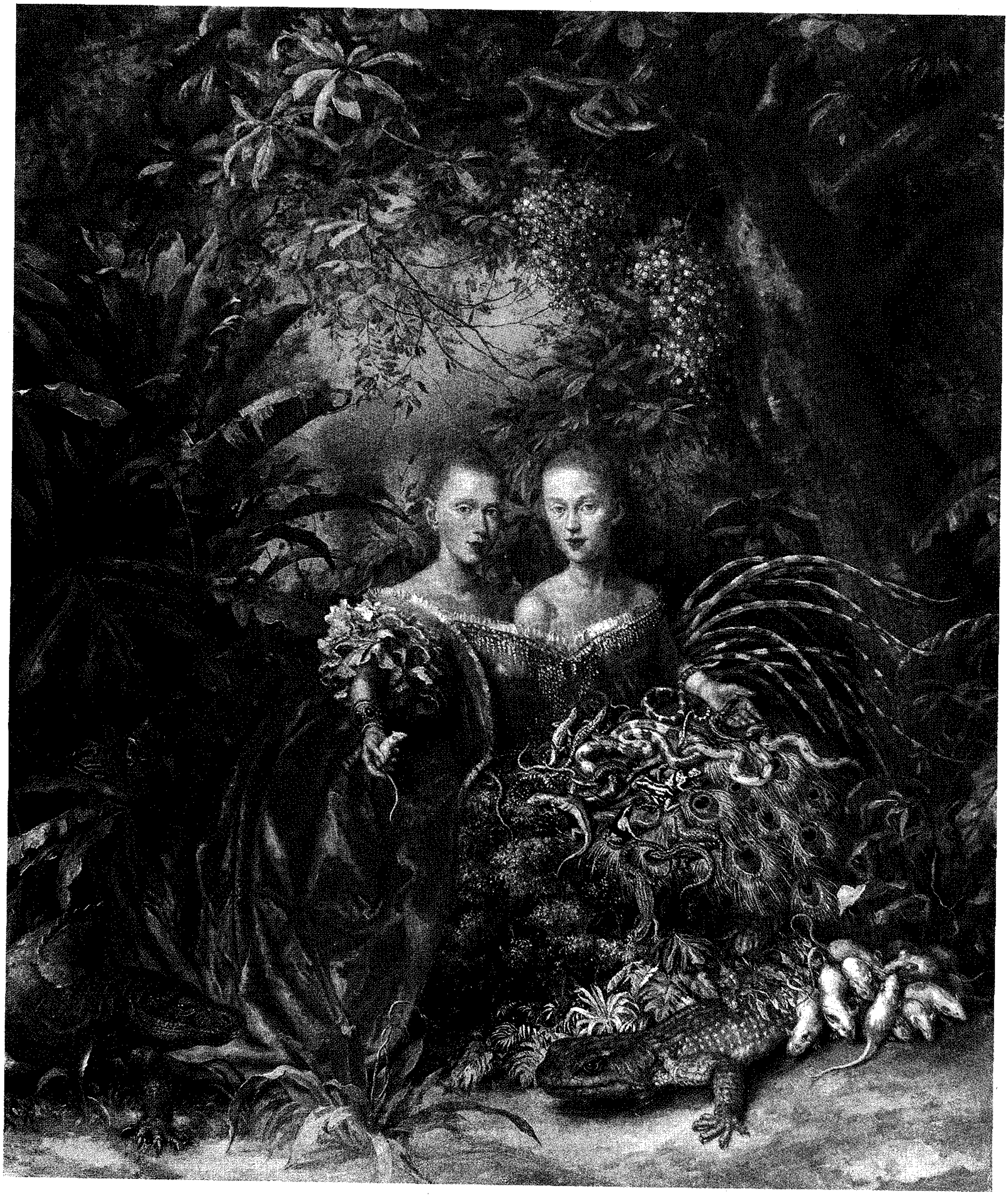
The girls discussed whether it was a sort of holiday or a sort of punishment, or a bit of both. Both had the idea that these were all perhaps not very good children, possibly being sent away for that reason. They were pleased to be able to define each other as "nice." They would stick together, they agreed.

The train crawled sluggishly farther and farther away from the city and their homes. It was not a clean train—the upholstery of their carriage had the dank smell of unwashed trousers, and the gusts of hot steam rolling backward past their windows were full of specks of flimsy ash, and sharp grit, and occasional fiery sparks that pricked face and fingers like hot needles if you opened the window. It was very noisy, too, whenever it picked up a little speed. The windowpanes were both grimy and misted up. The train stopped frequently, and when it stopped they used their gloves to wipe rounds, through which they peered out at flooded fields, furrowed hillsides, and tiny stations whose names were carefully blacked out, whose platforms were empty of life.

The children did not know that the namelessness was meant to baffle or delude an invading army. They felt—they did not think it out, but somewhere inside them the idea sprouted—that the erasure was because of them, because they were not meant to know where they were going or, like Hansel and Gretel, to find the way back. They did not speak to each other of this anxiety, but began the kind of conversation children have about things they really dislike, things that upset, or disgust, or frighten them. Semolina pudding with its grainy texture, mushy peas, fat on roast meat. Having your head held roughly back over the basin to have your hair washed, with cold water running down inside your liberty bodice. Gangs in playgrounds. They felt the pressure of all the other alien children in all the other carriages as a potential gang. They shared another square of chocolate, and licked their fingers, and looked out at a great white goose flapping its wings beside an inky pond.

The sky grew dark gray and in the end the train halted. The children got out, and lined up in a crocodile, and were led to a mud-colored bus. Penny and Primrose managed to get a seat together, although it was over the wheel, and both of them began to feel sick as the bus bumped along snaking country lanes, under whipping branches, with torn strips of thin cloud streaming across a full moon.

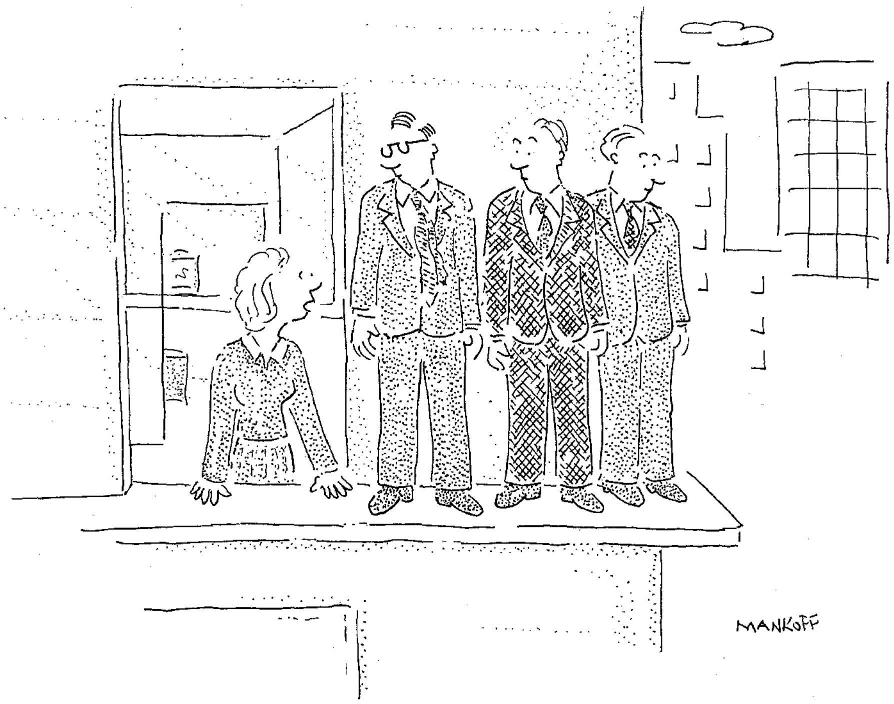
They were billeted in a mansion commandeered from its owner. The children were told they were there temporarily, until families were found to take them. Penny and Primrose held hands, and said to each other that it would be wizard if they could go to the same family, because at least they would have each other. They didn't say anything to the rather tired-looking ladies who were ordering them about, because, with the cunning of little children, they knew that requests were most often counterproductive—adults liked saying no. They imagined possible families into which they might be thrust. They did not discuss what they imagined, as these pictures, like the black station signs, were too frightening, and words might make some horror solid, in some magical way. Penny, who was a reading child, imagined Victorian dark pillars of severity, like Jane Eyre's Mr. Brocklehurst, or David Copperfield's Mr. Murdstone. Primrose imagined—she didn't know why—a fat woman with a white cap and round red arms who smiled nicely but made the children wear sacking aprons and scrub the steps and the



JULIE HEFFERNAN

stove. "It's like we were orphans," she said to Penny. "But we're not." Penny said, "If we manage to stick together . . ."

The great house had a double flight of imposing stairs to its front door, and carved griffins and unicorns on its balustrade. There was no lighting, because of the blackout. All the windows were shuttered. The children trudged up the staircase in their crocodile, and were given supper (Irish stew and rice pudding with a dollop of blood-red jam) before going to bed in long makeshift dormitories, where once servants had slept. They had camp beds (military issue) and gray shoddy blankets. Penny and Primrose got beds together but couldn't get a corner. They queued to brush their teeth in a tiny washroom, and both suffered (again without speaking) suffocating anxiety about what would happen if they wanted to pee in the middle of the night. They also suffered from a fear that in the dark the other children would start laughing and rushing and teasing, and turn themselves into a gang. But that did not hap-



"J.P. will be joining you by speakerphone."

• •

pen. Everyone was tired and anxious and orphaned. An uneasy silence, a drift of perturbed sleep, came over them all. The only sounds—from all parts of the great dormitory, it seemed—were suppressed snuffles and sobs, from faces pressed into thin pillows.

When daylight came, things seemed, as they mostly do, brighter and better. The children were given breakfast in a large vaulted room, at trestle tables, porridge made with water, and a dab of the red jam, heavy cups of strong tea. Then they were told they could go out and play until lunchtime. Children in those days—wherever they came from—were not closely watched, were allowed to come and go freely, and those evacuated children were not herded into any kind of holding pen or transit camp. They were told they should be back for lunch at twelve-thirty, by which time those in charge hoped to have sorted out their provisional future lives. It was not known how they would know when it was twelve-thirty, but it was expected that—despite the fact that few of them had wristwatches—they would know how to keep an eye on the time. It was what they were used to.

Penny and Primrose went out together, in their respectable coats and laced shoes, onto the terrace. The terrace appeared to them to be vast. It was covered with a fine layer of damp gravel, stained here and there bright green, or invaded by mosses. Beyond it was a stone balustrade, with a staircase leading down to a lawn. Across the lawn was a sculpted yew hedge. In the middle of the hedge was a wicket gate, and beyond the gate were trees. A forest, the little girls said to themselves.

"Let's go into the forest," said Penny, as though the sentence were required of her.

Primrose hesitated. Most of the other children were running up and down the terrace. Some boys were kicking a ball on the grass.

"O.K.," said Primrose. "We needn't go far."

"No. I've never been in a forest."

"Nor me."

"We ought to look at it, while we've got the opportunity," said Penny.

There was a very small child—one of the smallest—whose name, she told everyone, was Alys. With a "y," she told those who could spell, and those who couldn't, which surely included herself. She was barely out of nappies. She was quite extraordinarily pretty, pink and white, with large pale-blue eyes, and sparse little golden curls all over her head and neck, through which her pink skin could be seen. Nobody seemed to be in charge of her, no elder brother or sister. She had not quite managed to wash the tearstains from her dimpled cheeks.

She had made several attempts to attach herself to Penny and Primrose. They did not want her. They were excited about meeting and liking each other. She said now, "I'm coming, too, into the forest."

"No, you aren't," said Primrose.

"You're too little, you must stay here," said Penny.

"You'll get lost," said Primrose.

"You won't get lost. I'll come with you," said the little creature, with an engaging smile, made for loving parents and grandparents.

"We don't want you, you see," said Primrose.

"It's for your own good," said Penny.

Alys went on smiling hopefully, the smile becoming more of a mask.

"It will be all right," said Alys.

"Run," said Primrose.

They ran; they ran down the steps and across the lawn, and through the gate, into the forest. They didn't look back. They were long-legged little girls. The trees were silent round them, holding out their branches to the sun.

Primrose touched the warm skin of the nearest saplings, taking off her gloves to feel the cracks and knots. Penny looked into the thick of the forest. There was undergrowth—a mat of brambles and bracken. There were no obvious paths. Dark and light came and went, inviting and mysterious, as the wind pushed clouds across the face of the sun.

"We have to be careful not to get lost," she said. "In stories, people make marks on tree trunks, or unroll a thread, or leave a trail of white pebbles—to find their way back."

"We needn't go out of sight of the gate," said Primrose. "We could just explore a little bit."

They set off, very slowly. They went on tiptoe, making their own narrow passages through the undergrowth, which sometimes came as high as their thin shoulders. They were urban, and unaccustomed to silence. Then they began to hear small sounds. The chatter and repeated lilt and alarm of invisible birds, high up, further in. Rustling in dry leaves.

Slitherings, dry coughs, sharp cracks. They went on, pointing out to each other creepers draped with glistening berries, crimson, black, and emerald, little crops of toadstools, some scarlet, some ghostly pale, some a dead-flesh purple, some like tiny parasols—and some like pieces of meat protruding from tree trunks. They met blackberries, but didn't pick them, in case in this place they were dangerous or deceptive. They admired from a safe distance the stiff upright fruiting rods of the lords-and-ladies, packed with fat red berries.

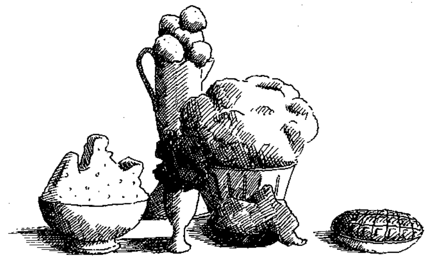
Did they hear it first or smell it? Both sound and scent were at first infinitesimal and dispersed. They gave the strange impression of moving in—in waves—from the whole perimeter of the forest. Both increased very slowly in intensity, and both were mixed, a sound and a smell fabricated of many disparate sounds and smells. A crunching, a crackling, a crushing, a heavy thumping, combining with threshing and thrashing, and added to that a gulping, heaving, boiling, bursting, steaming sound, full of bubbles and farts, piffs and explosions, swallowings and wallowings. The smell was worse, and more aggressive, than the sound. It was a liquid smell of putrefaction, the smell of maggoty things at the bottom of untended dustbins, blocked drains, mixed with the smell of bad eggs, and of rotten carpets and ancient polluted bedding. The ordinary forest smells and sounds were extinguished. The two little girls looked at each other, and took each other's hand. Speechlessly and instinctively, they crouched down behind a fallen tree trunk, and trembled, as the thing came into view.

Its head appeared to form, or first become visible in the distance, between the trees. Its face—which was triangular—appeared like a rubbery or fleshy mask over a shapeless sprouting bulb of a head, like a monstrous turnip. Its color was the color of flayed flesh, pitted with wormholes, and its expression was neither wrath nor greed but pure misery. Its most defined feature was a vast mouth, pulled down and down at the corners, tight with a kind of pain. Its lips were thin, and raised, like welts from whipstrokes. It had blind, opaque white eyes, fringed with fleshy lashes and brows like the feelers of sea anemones. Its face was close to the ground and moved toward the children between its forearms, which were squat, thick, powerful, and akimbo, like a cross between a washerwoman's and a primeval dragon's. The flesh on these forearms was glistening and mottled.

The rest of its very large body appeared to be glued together, like still wet papier-mâché, or the carapace of stones and straws and twigs worn by caddis flies underwater. It had a tubular shape, as a turd has a tubular shape, a provisional amalgam. It was made of rank meat, and decaying vegetation, but it also trailed veils and prostheses of man-made materials, bits of wire netting, foul dishcloths, wirewool full of pan scrubbings, rusty nuts and bolts. It had feeble stubs and stumps of very slender legs, growing out of it at all angles, wavering and rippling like the suckered feet of a caterpillar or the squirming fringe of a centipede. On and on it came, bending and crushing whatever lay in its path, including bushes, though not substantial trees, which it wound between, awkwardly. The little girls observed, with horrified fascination, that when it met a sharp stone, or a narrow tree trunk, it allowed itself to be sliced through, flowed sluggishly round in two or three smaller worms, convulsed, and reunited. Its progress was apparently very painful, for it moaned and whined among its other burblings and belchings. They thought it could not see, or certainly could not see clearly. It and its stench passed within a few feet of their tree trunk, humping along, leaving behind it a trail of bloody slime and dead foliage.

Its end was flat and blunt, almost transparent, like some earthworms.

When it had gone, Penny and Primrose, kneeling on the moss and dead leaves, put their arms about each other, and hugged each other, shaking with dry sobs. Then they stood up, still silent, and stared together, hand in hand, at the trail of obliteration and destruction, which wound out of the forest and into it again. They went back, hand in hand, without looking behind them, afraid that the wicket gate, the lawn, the stone steps, the balustrade, the terrace, and the great house would be transmogrified, or simply not there. But the boys were still playing football on the lawn, a group of girls were skipping and singing shrilly on the gravel. They let go each other's hand, and went back in.



They did not speak to each other again.

The next day, they were separated and placed with strange families. Their stay in these families—Primrose was in a dairy farm, Penny was in a parsonage—did not in fact last very long, though then the time seemed slow motion and endless. Later, Primrose remembered the sound of milk spurting in the pail, and Penny remembered the empty corsets of the Vicar's wife, hanging bony on the line. They remembered dandelion clocks, but you can remember those from anywhere, any time. They remembered the thing they had seen in the forest, on the contrary, in the way you remember those very few dreams—almost all nightmares—that have the quality of life itself. (Though what are dreams if not life itself?) They remembered too solid flesh, too precise a stink, a rattle and a soughing that thrilled the nerves and the cartilage of their growing ears. In the memory, as in such a dream, they felt, I cannot get out, this is a real thing in a real place.

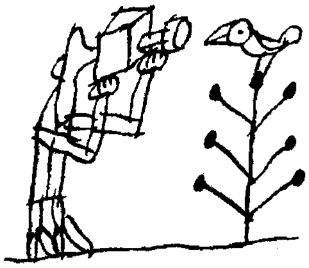
They returned from evacuation, like many evacuees, so early that they then lived through wartime in the city, bombardment, blitz, unearthly light and roaring, changed landscapes, holes in their world where the newly dead had been. Both lost their fathers. Primrose's father was in the Army, and was killed, very late in the war, on a crowded troop carrier sunk in the Far East. Penny's father, a much older man, was in the Auxiliary Fire Service, and died in a sheet of flame in the East India Docks on the Thames, pumping evaporating water from a puny coil of hose. They found it hard, after the war, to remember these different men. The claspers of memory could not grip the drowned and the burned. Primrose saw an inane grin under a khaki cap, because her mother had a snapshot. Penny thought she remembered her father, already gray-headed, brushing ash off his boots and trouser cuffs as he put on his tin hat to go out. She thought she remembered a quaver of fear in his tired face, and the muscles composing themselves into resolution. It was not much, what either of them remembered.

After the war, their fates were still similar and dissimilar. Penny's widowed mother embraced grief, closed her face and her curtains. Primrose's mother married one of the many admirers she had had before the ship went down, gave birth to another five children, and developed varicose veins and a smoker's cough. She dyed her blond hair with peroxide when it faded. Both Primrose and Penny were only children who now, because of the war, lived in amputated or unreal families. Penny was a good student and in due course went to university, where she chose to study developmental psychology. Primrose had little education. She was always being kept off school to look after the others. She, too, dyed her blond curls with peroxide when they turned mousy and faded. She got fat as Penny got thin. Neither of them married. Penny became a child psychologist, working with the abused, the displaced, the disturbed. Primrose did this and that. She was a barmaid. She worked in a shop. She went to help at various church crèches and Salvation Army gatherings, and discovered she had a talent for storytelling. She became Aunty Primrose, with her own repertoire. She was employed to tell tales to kindergartens and entertain at children's parties. She was much in demand at Halloween, and had her own circle of bright-colored plastic chairs in a local shopping mall, where she kept an eye on the children of burdened women, keeping them safe, offering them just a frisson of fear and terror, which made them wriggle with pleasure.

The house in the country aged differently. During this period of time—while the little girls became women—it was handed over to the nation, which turned it into a living museum. Guided tours took place in it, at regulated times. During these tours, the ballroom and intimate drawing rooms were fenced off with crimson twisted ropes on little brass one-eyed pedestals. The bored and the curious peered in at four-poster beds and pink silk fauteuils, at silver-framed photographs of wartime royalty, and crackling crazing Renaissance and Enlightenment portraits. In the room where the evacuees had eaten their rationed meals, the history of the house was displayed, on posters, in glass cases, with helpful notices and opened copies of old diaries and records. There was no mention of the evacuees, whose presence appeared to have been too brief to have left any trace.

The two women met in this room on an autumn day in 1984. They had come with a group, walking in a chattering crocodile behind a guide. They prowled around the room, each alone with herself, in opposite directions, each without acknowledging the other's presence. Their mothers had died that spring, within a week of each other, though this coincidence was unknown to them. It had made both of them think of taking a holiday, and both had chosen that part of the world. Penny was wearing a charcoal trouser suit and a black velvet hat. Primrose wore a floral knit long jacket over a shell-pink cashmere sweater, over a rustling long skirt with an elastic waist, in a mustard-colored tapestry print. Her hips and bosom were bulky. Both of them, at the same moment, leaned over an image in a medieval-looking illustrated book. Primrose thought it was a very old book. Penny assumed it was nineteenth-century mock-medieval. It showed a knight, on foot, in a forest, lifting his sword to slay something. The knight shone on the rounded slope of the page, in the light, which caught the gilding on his helmet and sword belt. It was not possible to see what was being slain. This was because, both in the tangled vegetation of the image and in the way the book was displayed in the case, the enemy, or victim, was in shadows.

Neither of them could read the ancient (or pseudo-ancient) black letter of the text beside the illustration. There was a typed description, under the book. They had to lean forward to read it, and to see what was worming its way into, or out of, the deep spine of the book, and that was how each came to see the other's face, close up, in the glass, which was both transparent and reflective. Their transparent reflected faces lost detail—cracked lipstick, pouches, fine lines of wrinkles—and looked both younger and grayer, less substantial. And that is how they came to recognize each other, as they might not have done, plump face to bony face. They breathed each other's names—Penny, Primrose—and their breath misted the glass, obscuring the knight and his opponent. I could have died, I could have wet my knickers, said Penny and Primrose afterward to each other, and both experienced this still moment as pure, dangerous shock. They read the caption, which was about the Loathly Worm, which, tradition held, had infested the countryside and had been killed more than once by scions of that house—Sir Lionel, Sir Boris, Sir Guillem. The Worm, the typewriter had tapped out, was an English worm, not a European dragon, and, like most such worms, was wingless. In some sightings it was reported as having vestigial legs, hands, or feet. In others it was limbless. It had, in monstrous form, the capacity of common or garden worms to sprout new heads or trunks if it was divided, so that two worms, or more, replaced one. This was why it had been killed so often, yet reappeared. It had been reported travelling with a slithering pack of young ones, but these may have been only revitalized segments.



Being English, they thought of tea. There was a tearoom in the great house, in a converted stable at the back. There they stood silently side by side, clutching floral plastic trays spread with briar roses, and purchased scones, superior raspberry jam in tiny jam jars, little plastic tubs of clotted cream. "You couldn't get cream or real jam in the war," said Primrose as they found a corner table. She said wartime rationing had made her permanently greedy, and thin Penny agreed it had—clotted cream was still a treat.

They watched each other warily, offering bland snippets of autobiography in politely hushed voices. Primrose thought Penny looked gaunt, and Penny thought Primrose looked raddled. They established the skein of coincidences—dead fathers, unmarried status, child-caring professions, recently dead mothers. Circling like beaters, they approached the covert thing in the forest. They discussed the great house, politely. Primrose admired the quality of the carpets. Penny said it was nice to see the old pictures back on the wall. Primrose said, Funny really, that there was all that history, but no sign that they, the children, that was, had ever been there. Funny, said Penny, that they should meet each other next to that book, with that picture. "Creepy," said Primrose in a light, light cobweb voice, not looking at Penny. "We saw that thing. When we went in the forest."

"Yes, we did," said Penny. "We saw it."

"Did you ever wonder," asked Primrose, "if we really saw it?"

"Never for a moment," said Penny. "That is, I don't know what it was, but I've always been quite sure we saw it."

"Does it change—do you remember all of it?"

"It was a horrible thing, and yes, I remember all of it, there isn't a bit of it I can manage to forget. Though I forget all sorts of things," said Penny, in a thin voice, a vanishing voice.

"And have you ever told anyone of it, spoken of it?" asked Primrose more urgently, leaning forward.

"No," said Penny. She had not. She said, "Who would believe it?"

"That's what I thought," said Primrose. "I didn't speak. But it stuck in my mind like a tapeworm in your gut. I think it did me no good."

"It did me no good either," said Penny. "No good at all. I've thought about it," she said to the aging woman opposite, whose face quivered under her dyed goldilocks. "I think, I think there are things that are real—more real than we are—but mostly we don't cross their paths, or they don't cross ours. Maybe at very bad times we get into their world, or notice what they are doing in ours."

Primrose nodded energetically. She looked as though sharing was solace, and Penny, to whom it was not solace, grimaced with pain.

"Sometimes I think that thing finished me off," Penny said to Primrose, a child's voice rising in a woman's gullet, arousing a little girl's scared smile, which wasn't a smile on Primrose's face.

Primrose said, "It did finish her off, that little one, didn't it? She got into its path, didn't she? And when it had gone by—she wasn't anywhere," said Primrose. "That was how it was?"

"Nobody ever asked where she was or looked for her," said Penny.

"I wondered if we'd made her up," said Primrose. "But I didn't, we didn't."

"Her name was Alys."

"With a 'y.' "

There had been a mess, a disgusting mess, they remembered, but no particular sign of anything that might have been, or been part of, or belonged to, a persistent little girl called Alys.

Primrose shrugged voluptuously, let out a gale of a sigh, and rearranged her flesh in her clothes.

"Well, we know we're not mad, anyway," she said. "We've got into a mystery, but we didn't make it up. It wasn't a delusion. So it was good we met, because now we needn't be afraid we're mad, need we—we can get on with things, so to speak?"

They arranged to have dinner together the following evening. They were staying in different bed-and-breakfasts and neither of them thought of exchanging addresses. They agreed on a restaurant in the market square of the local town—Seraphina's Hot Pot—and a time, seven-thirty. They did not even discuss spending the next day together. Primrose went on a local bus tour. Penny took a long solitary walk. The weather was gray, spitting fine rain. Both arrived at their lodgings with headaches, and both made tea with the tea bags and kettle provided in their rooms. They sat on their beds. Penny's had a quilt with blowsy cabbage roses. Primrose's had a black-and-white checked gingham duvet. They turned on their televisions, watched the same game show, listened to the inordinate jolly laughter.

Seven-thirty came and went, and neither woman moved. Both, indistinctly, imagined the other waiting at a table, watching a door open and shut. Neither moved. What could they have said, they asked themselves, but only perfunctorily.

The next day, Penny thought about the wood, put on her walking shoes, and set off obliquely in the opposite direction. Primrose sat over her breakfast, which was English and ample. The wood, the real and imagined wood—both before and after she had entered it with Penny—had always been simultaneously a source of attraction and of discomfort, shading into terror. Without

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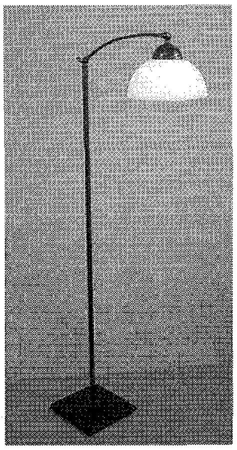

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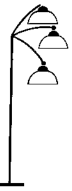

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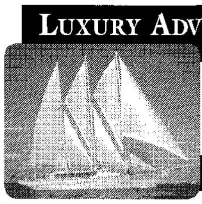

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speaking to herself a sentence in her head—"I shall go there"—Primrose decided. And she went straight there, full of warm food, arriving as the morning brightened with the first busload of tourists, and giving them the slip, to take the path they had once taken, across the lawn and through the wicket gate.

The wood was much the same, but denser and more inviting in its new greenness. Primrose's body decided to set off in a rather different direction from the one the little girls had taken. New bracken was uncoiling with snaky force. Yesterday's rain still glittered on limp new hazel leaves and threads of gossamer. Small feathered throats above her whistled and trilled with enchanting territorial aggression and male self-assertion, which were to Primrose simply the chorus. She found a mossy bank, with posies of primroses, which she recognized and took vaguely as a good sign, a personal sign. She was better at flowers than birds, because there had been Flower Fairies in the school bookshelves when she was little, with the flowers painted accurately, accompanied by truly pretty human creatures, all children, clothed in the blues and golds, russets and purples of the flowers and fruits. Here she saw and recognized them, windflower and bryony, self-heal and dead nettle, and had—despite where she was—a lovely lapping sense of invisible, just invisible life swarming in the leaves and along the twigs.

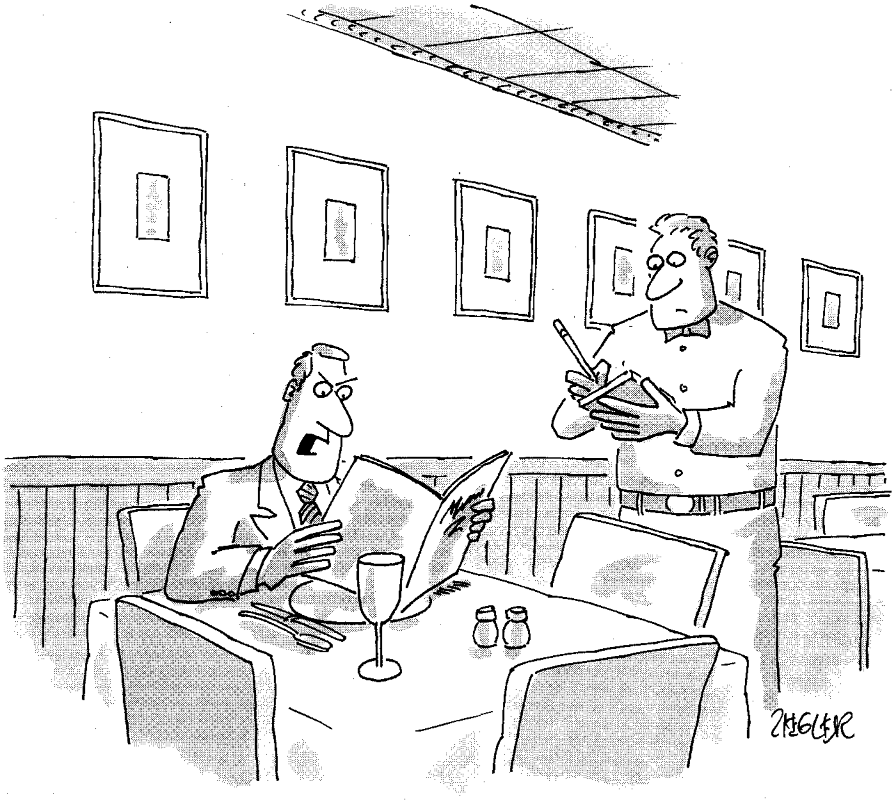
She stopped. She did not like the sound of her own toiling breath. She was not very fit. She saw, then, a whisking in the bracken, a twirl of fur, thin and flaming, quivering on a tree trunk. She saw a squirrel, a red squirrel, watching her from a bough. She had to sit down, as she remembered her mother. She sat on a hummock of grass, rather heavily. She remembered them all, Nutkin and Moldywarp, Brock and Sleepy Dormouse, Natty Newt and Ferdy Frog. Her mother hadn't told stories and hadn't opened gates into imaginary worlds. But she had been good with her fingers. Every Christmas during the war, when toys, and indeed materials, were not to be had, Primrose had woken to find in her stocking a new stuffed creature, made from fur fabric, with button eyes and horny claws. There had been an artistry to them. The stuffed squirrel was the essence of squirrel, the fox was watchful, the newt was slithery. They did not wear anthropomorphic jackets or caps, which made it easier to invest them with imaginary natures. She believed in Father Christmas, and the discovery that her mother had made the toys, the vanishing of magic, had been a breathtaking blow. She could not be grateful for the skill and the imagination, so uncharacteristic of her flirtatious mother. The creatures continued to accumulate. A spider, a Bambi. She told herself stories at night about a girl-woman, an enchantress in a fairy wood, loved and protected by an army of wise and gentle animals. She slept banked in by stuffed creatures, as the house in the blitz was banked in by inadequate sandbags.

Primrose registered the red squirrel as disappointing—stringier and more rat-like than its plump gray city cousins. But she knew it was special, and when it took off from branch to branch, flicking its extended tail like a sail, gripping with its tiny hands, she set out to follow it. It would take her to the center, she thought. It could easily have leaped out of sight, she thought, but it didn't. She pushed through brambles into denser, greener shadows. Juices stained her skirts and skin. She began to tell herself a story about staunch Primrose, not giving up, making her way to "the center." Her childhood stories had all been in the third person. "She was not afraid." "She faced up to the wild beasts. They cowered." She laddered her tights and muddied her shoes and breathed heavier. The squirrel stopped to clean its face. She crushed bluebells and saw the sinister hoods of arum lilies.

She had no idea how far she had come, but she decided that the clearing where she found herself was the center. The squirrel had stopped, and was running up and down a single tree. There was a mossy mound that could have had a thronelike aspect, if you were being imaginative. So she sat on it. "She came to the center and sat on the mossy chair."

Now what?

She had not forgotten what they had seen, the blank miserable face, the powerful claws, the raggle-taggle train of accumulated decay. She had come neither to look for it nor to confront it, but she had come because it was there. She had known all her life that she, Primrose, had really been in a magic for-



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The New York Observer on NYC

Funky Charmer Makes Bold Entrance into West Village

"NYC bills itself as a contemporary American bistro, which means the chef can do pretty much whatever he wants. I've followed the cooking of Herb Wilson, the chef, since I first discovered him at Zut! in Tribeca, and later at Bambou, the Jamaican restaurant on East 14th Street...I've always liked his food. It's gutsy and generous; he's not afraid to season his dishes, and he's not afraid of strong flavors, garlic, or spices.

At NYC, some of the dishes have a Southern touch: grits, collards, ham hocks. Mr. Wilson's down-home hunk of a grilled double pork chop, smoked in-house, is a triumph, served with escarole, navy beans and (a first for me at least) "ham hock jus." With a basket of warm, soft biscuits on the side, it's heaven. So are the steamed cockles that come floating in a complex briny broth with shredded collards, roasted tomatoes, and lardons.

Even Mom couldn't come up with a roast chicken better than Mr. Wilson's which has a beautifully crisp skin and is served with leeks, spinach, and a port wine sauce. The sole crusted with rice is a marvel, a wonderful interplay of textures complemented by cucumber, tomato, and a lemony sauce seasoned with fresh mint. This food has a real feeling behind it.

Desserts by pastry chef Peter Steele include a lovely hot chocolate souffle that's runny in the center, and a splendid warm blackberry-plum crisp with vanilla ice cream.

NYC is an odd-looking place, but it has a funky charm. There is a great deal of white wood to go with all of those white chairs, and there are leather banquettes, too, in cream, red, and black...Behind the bar, glass-fronted cabinets are filled with bottles that provide bright splashes of color, and the cream walls are hung with old posters from movies such as *The Lady from Shanghai* and Barbara Stanwyck's *The Woman in Red.*"

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est. She knew that the forest was the source of terror. She had never frightened the littluns she entertained, with tales of lost children in forests. She frightened them with slimy things that came up the plughole, or swarmed out of the U-bend in the lavatory, and were dispatched by bravery and magic. But the woods in her tales bred glamour. They were places where you used words like "spangles" and "sequins" for real dewdrops on real dock leaves. Primrose knew that glamour and the thing they had seen, brilliance and the ashen stink, came from the same place. She made both things safe for the littluns by restricting them to pantomime flats and sweet illustrations. She didn't look at what she knew, better not, but she did know she knew, she recognized confusedly.

Now what?

She sat on the moss, and a voice in her head said, "I want to go home." And she heard herself give a bitter, entirely grownup little laugh, for what was home? What did she know about home?

Where she lived was above a Chinese takeaway. She had a dangerous cupboard-corner she cooked in, a bed, a clothes-rail, an armchair deformed by generations of bottoms. She thought of this place in faded browns and beiges, seen through drifting coils of Chinese cooking steam, scented with stewing pork and a bubbling chicken broth. Home was not real, as all the sturdy twigs and roots in the wood were real. The stuffed animals were piled on the bed and the carpet, their fur rubbed, their pristine stare gone from their scratched eyes. She thought about what one thought was real, sitting there on the moss throne at the center. When Mum had come in, snivelling, to say Dad was dead, Primrose herself had been preoccupied with whether pudding would be tapioca or semolina, whether there would be jam, and, subsequently, how ugly Mum's dripping nose was, how she looked as though she were putting it on. She remembered the semolina and the rather nasty blackberry jam, the taste and the texture, to this day. So was that real, was that home?

She had later invented a picture of a cloudy aquamarine sea under a gold sun, in which a huge fountain of white curling water rose from a foundering ship. It was very beautiful but not real. She could not remember Dad. She could remember the Thing in the Forest, and she could remember Alys. The fact that the mossy tump had lovely colors—crimson and emerald—didn't mean she didn't remember the Thing. She remembered what Penny had said about "things that are more real than we are." She had met one. Here at the center, the spout of water was more real than the semolina, because she was where such things reign. The word she found was "reign." She had understood something, and did not know what she had understood. She wanted badly to go home, and she wanted never to move. The light was lovely in the leaves. The squirrel flirted its tail and suddenly set off again, springing into the branches. The woman lumbered to her feet and licked the bramble scratches on the back of her hands.

Penny walked very steadily, keeping to hedgerows and field-edge paths. She remembered the Thing. She remembered it clearly and daily. But she walked away, noticing and not noticing that her path was deflected by field forms and the lay of the land into a snaking sickle shape. As the day wore on, she settled into her stride and lifted her eyes. When she saw the wood on the horizon, she knew it was the wood, although she was seeing it from an unfamiliar aspect, from where it appeared to be perched on a conical hillock, ridged as though it had been grasped and squeezed by coils of strength. It was almost dusk. She mounted the slope, and went in over a suddenly discovered stile.

Once inside, she moved cautiously. She stood stock-still, and snuffed the air for the remembered rottenness: she listened to the sounds of the trees and the creatures. She smelled rottenness, but it was normal rottenness, leaves and stems mulching back into earth. She heard sounds. Not birdsong, for it was too late in the day, but the odd raucous warning croak. She heard her own heartbeat in the thickening brown air.

It was no use looking for familiar tree trunks or tussocks. They had had a lifetime, her lifetime, to alter out of recognition.

She began to think she discerned dark tunnels in the undergrowth, where something might have rolled and slid. Mashed seedlings, broken twigs and fronds, none of it very recent. There were things caught in the thorns, flimsy colorless shreds of

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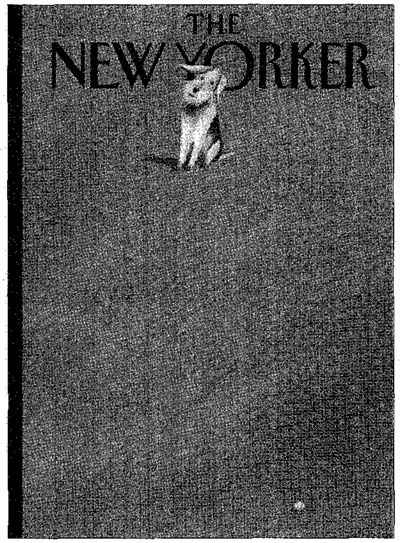
"PUPPY LOVE"
by Mark Ulriksen



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damp wool or fur. She peered down the tunnels and noted where the scrapings hung thickest. She forced herself to go into the dark, stooping, occasionally crawling on hands and knees. The silence was heavy. She found threadworms of knitting wool, unravelled dishcloth cotton, clinging newsprint. She found odd sausage-shaped tubes of membrane, containing fragments of hair and bone and other inanimate stuffs. They were like monstrous owl pellets, or the gut-shaped hairballs vomited by cats. Penny went forward, putting aside briars and tough stems with careful fingers. It had been here, but how long ago?

Quite suddenly, she came out at a place she remembered. The clearing was larger, the tree trunks were thicker, but the great log behind which they had hidden still lay there. The place was almost the ghost of a camp. The trees round about were hung with pennants and streamers, like the scorched, hacked, threadbare banners in the chapel of the great house, with their brown stains of earth or blood. It had been here, it had never gone away.

Penny moved slowly and dreamily round, looking for things. She found a mock-tortoiseshell hairslide, and a shoe button with a metal shank. She found a bird skeleton, quite fresh, bashed flat. She found ambivalent shards and several teeth, of varying sizes and shapes. She found—spread around, half hidden by roots, stained green but glinting white—a collection of small bones, finger bones, tiny toes, a rib, and finally what might be a brainpan and brow. She thought of putting them in her knapsack, and then thought she could not. She was not an anatomist. The tiny bones might have been badger or fox.

She sat down, with her back against the fallen trunk. She thought, Now I am watching myself as you do in a safe dream, but then, when I saw it, it was one of those dreams where you are inside and cannot get out. Except that it wasn't a dream.

It was the encounter with the Thing that had led her to deal professionally in dreams. Something that resembled unreality had lumbered into reality, and she had seen it. She had been the reading child, but after the sight of the Thing she had not been able to inhabit the customary and charming unreality of books. She had become good at studying what could not be seen. She took an interest in the dead, who inhabited real history. She was drawn to the invisible forces that moved in molecules and caused them to coagulate or dissipate. She had become a psychotherapist "to be useful." That was not quite accurate. The corner of the blanket that covered the unthinkable had been turned back enough for her to catch sight of it. She was in its world. It was not by accident that she had come to specialize in severely autistic children, children who twittered, or banged, or stared, who sat damp and absent on Penny's official lap and told her no dreams. The world they knew was a real world. Often Penny thought it was the real world, from which even their desperate parents were at least partly shielded. Somebody had to occupy themselves with the hopeless. Penny felt she could.

All the leaves of the forest began slowly to quaver and then to clatter. Far away, there was the sound of something heavy, and sluggish, stirring. Penny sat very still and expectant. She heard the old blind rumble, she sniffed the old stink. It came from no direction; it was all around; as though the Thing encompassed the wood, or as though it travelled in multiple fragments, as it was described in the old text. It was dark now. What was visible had no distinct color, only shades of ink and elephant.

Now, thought Penny, and just as suddenly as it had begun the turmoil ceased. It was as though the Thing had turned away; she could feel the tremble of the wood recede and become still. Quite rapidly, over the treetops, a huge disk of white gold mounted and hung. Penny remembered her father, standing in the cold light of the full moon, and saying wryly that the bombers would not come tonight, they were safe under a cloudless full moon. He had vanished in an oven of red-yellow roaring, Penny had guessed, or been told, or imagined. Her mother had sent her away before allowing the fireman to speak, who had come with the news. She had been a creep-mouse on stairs and in cubbyholes, trying to overhear what was being imparted. Her mother didn't, or couldn't, want her company. She caught odd phrases of talk—"nothing really to identify," "absolutely no doubt." He had been a tired, gentle man with ash in his trouser turnups. There had been a funeral. Penny remembered thinking there was nothing, or next to nothing, in the coffin his fellow-firemen shouldered. It went up so lightly. It was so easy to set down on the crematorium slab.

They had been living behind the blackout anyway, but her mother went on living behind drawn curtains long after the war was over.

The moon had released the wood, it seemed. Penny stood up and brushed leaf mold off her clothes. She had been ready for it, and it had not come. She felt disappointed. But she accepted her release and found her way back to the fields and her village along liquid trails of moonlight.

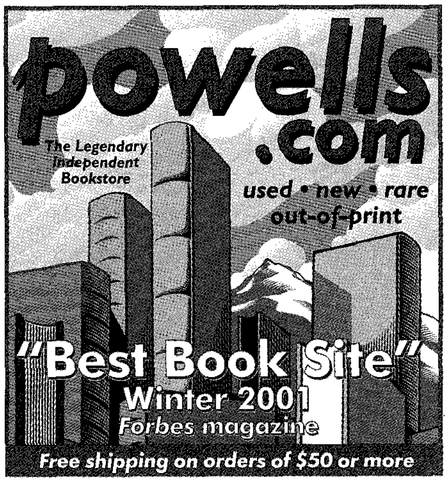
The two women took the same train back to the city, but did not encounter each other until they got out. The passengers scurried and shuffled toward the exit, mostly heads down. Both women remembered how they had set out in the wartime dark, with their twig legs and gas masks. Both raised their heads as they neared the barrier, not in hope of being met, for they would not be, but automatically, to calculate where to go and what to do. They saw each other's faces in the cavernous gloom, two pale, recognizable rounds, far enough apart for speech, and even greetings, to be awkward. In the dimness, they were reduced to similarity—dark eyeholes, set mouth. For a moment or two, they stood and simply stared. On that first occasion the station vault had been full of curling steam, and the air gritty with ash. Now the blunt-nosed sleek diesel they had left was blue and gold under a layer of grime. They saw each other through the black imagined veil that grief or pain or despair hangs over the visible world. Each saw the other's face and thought of the unforgettable misery of the face they had seen in the forest. Each thought that the other was the witness, who made the thing certainly real, who prevented her from slipping into the comfort of believing she had imagined it or made it up. So they stared at each other, blankly, without acknowledgment, then picked up their baggage, and turned away into the crowd.

Penny found that the black veil had somehow become part of her vision. She thought constantly about faces, her father's, her mother's, Primrose's face, the hopeful little girl, the woman staring up at her from the glass case, staring at her conspiratorially over the clotted cream. The blond infant Alys, an ingratiating sweet smile. The half-human face of the Thing. She tried to remember that face completely, and suffered over the detail of the dreadful droop of its mouth, the exact inanity of its blind squinnying. Present faces were blank disks, shadowed moons. Her patients came and went. She was increasingly unable to distinguish one from another. The face of the Thing hung in her brain, jealously soliciting her attention, distracting her from dailiness. She had gone back to its place, and had not seen it. She needed to see it. Why she needed it was because it was more real than she was. She would go and face it. What else was there, she asked herself, and answered herself, nothing.

So she made her way back, sitting alone in the train as the fields streaked past, drowsing through a century-long night under the cabbage quilt in the B. and B. This time, she went in the old way, from the house, through the garden gate; she found the old trail quickly, her sharp eye picked up the trace of its detritus, and soon enough she was back in the clearing, where her cairn of tiny bones by the tree trunk was undisturbed. She gave a little sigh, dropped to her knees, and then sat with her back to the rotting wood and silently called the Thing. Almost immediately, she sensed its perturbation, saw the trouble in the branches, heard the lumbering, smelled its ancient smell. It was a grayish, unremarkable day. She closed her eyes briefly as the noise and movement grew stronger. When it came, she would look it in the face, she would see what it was. She clasped her hands loosely in her lap. Her nerves relaxed. Her blood slowed. She was ready.

Primrose was in the shopping mall, putting out her circle of rainbow-colored plastic chairs. She creaked as she bent over them. It was pouring with rain outside, but the mall was enclosed like a crystal palace in a casing of glass. The floor under the rainbow chairs was gleaming dappled marble. They were in front of a dimpling fountain, with lights shining up through the greenish water, making golden rings round the polished pebbles and wishing coins that lay there. The little children collected round her: their mothers kissed them goodbye, told them to be good and quiet and listen to the nice lady. They had little transparent plastic cups of shining orange juice, and each had a biscuit in silver foil. They were all colors—black skin, brown skin, pink skin, freckled skin, pink jacket, yellow jacket, purple hood, scarlet hood. Some grinned and some whimpered, some wriggled, some were still. Primrose sat on the edge of the fountain. She had decided what to do. She smiled her best, most comfortable smile, and adjusted her golden locks. Listen to me, she told them, and I'll tell you something amazing, a story that's never been told before.

There were once two little girls who saw, or believed they saw, a thing in a forest. . . . ♦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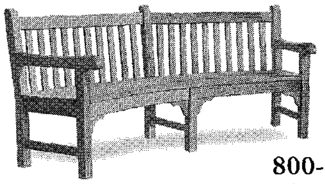

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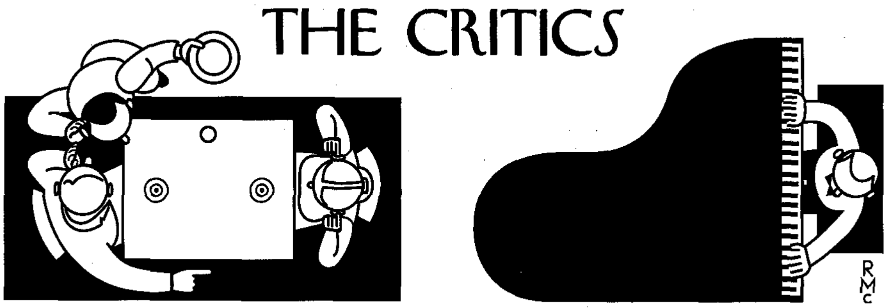
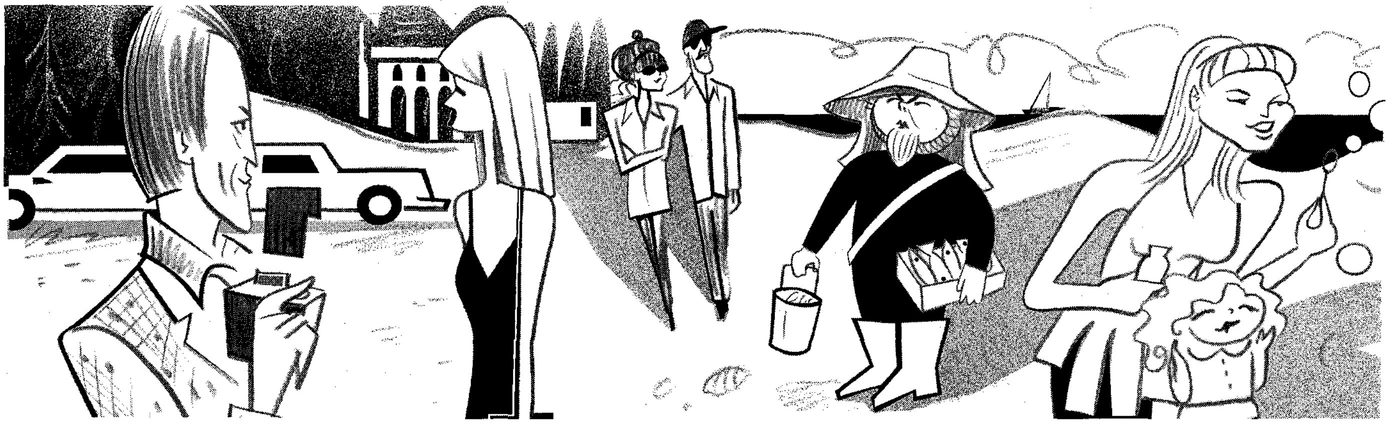


ON TELEVISION

BEACHED

Barbara Kopple on the Hamptons social parade.

BY NANCY FRANKLIN



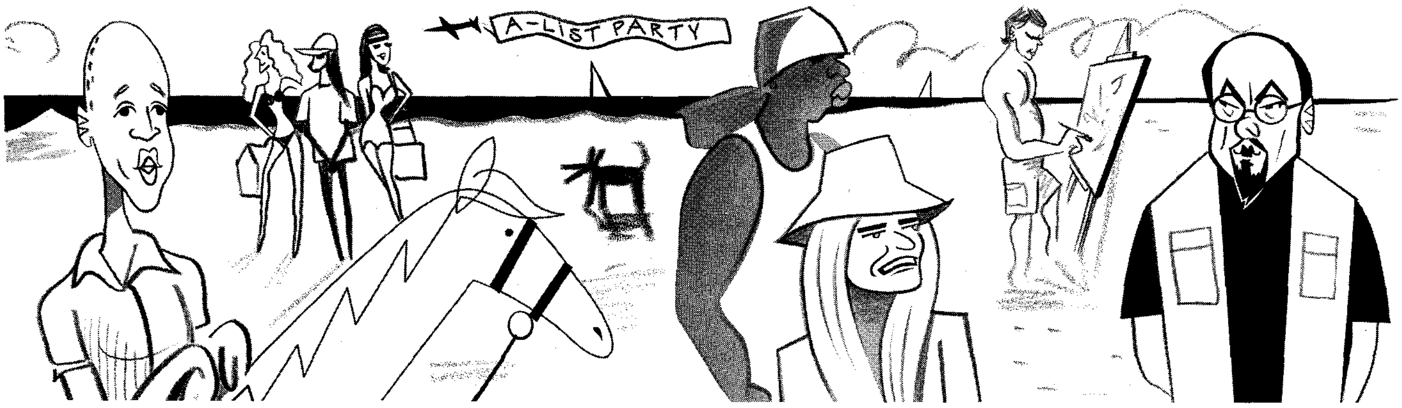
ROBERT RISKO

Although the Hamptons are not a universal object of fantasy on the scale of Hollywood or Manhattan—there are no movies or musicals about young people in Kansas dreaming of making it in East Hampton someday—they have an allure that is at least as powerful, because it is based on exclusivity: the Hamptons are what the people who *have* made it in Hollywood and Manhattan fantasize about. Many New Yorkers look on the Hamptons—strictly speaking, a half-dozen or so disparate villages, which are often lumped together in the media and hence in the popular imagination—with a mixture of contempt and envy, the former inspired by the saturation-level coverage of the goings on of the rich, famous, and foolish, and the latter inspired by the natural beauty of the area, the elemental pull of the ocean and the air and the land, and by how out of reach it seems to all but the luckiest few. The beauty, the money, the elusiveness—all these converge to make the Hamptons viscerally fascinating, a kind of perfect storm of a subject.

So it's not all that surprising that the documentary filmmaker Barbara Kopple has chosen this strip of Long Island's South Fork for her latest film, "The Hamptons," which will be shown on ABC, in two parts, on June 2nd and 3rd—even though it seems a long way from the work with which she made her reputation, the 1976 "Harlan County U.S.A.," about a coal miners' strike in Kentucky, and the 1990 "American Dream," about a strike at a meatpacking plant in Minnesota. (Both films won Academy Awards.) During the making of those movies, Kopple spent an enormous amount of time with the people she was filming, and they got to know her and trust her, and the movies have an intimacy that is in part what gives them their impact. If she could achieve that level of penetration in the Hamptons, she could perhaps tell us something new, something we don't already know from the pages of *New York* and the New York *Observer*. (Of course, there are people who actually skip the articles about socialites, but there are many more of us who *think* we're skipping them only to wake up one day and realize to our horror that we know who the Hilton sisters are.)

Given Kopple's gifts, it is surprising that "The Hamptons" turned out to be as superficial as it is, both in technique and in content. (The title sequence even looks and sounds like a commercial.) At the beginning of the movie, there are some promising segments and juxtapositions. The first voice you hear is that of the media hound Alec Baldwin, talking about how when he came to the Hamptons the place "just had a grip on me." Well put, and who would deny a boy from the suburbs of Long Island the right to talk about movin' on up to the East End? Next, Kopple takes us to a fishing boat, where one of the men says that he understands why people want to come to the Hamptons, but the problem is that "they come here in such numbers they destroy the very thing that they come for." He goes on, "And there's another reality that takes place—they gradually change it to where they came from." Or not so gradually: now we're at a cattle call in New York City, a large party where attractive young men and women are being recruited for shares in a summer rental that will have thirty-five people in it every weekend. One woman, a matrimonial attorney, says that she's determined to find a husband this summer: "Like, I need to be engaged by twenty-nine, because I will *not* be not married by thirty, because I need to have my kids at thirty-two, then I have to open my own practice." Godspeed, honey.

Kopple's movie, which chronicles the summer of 2001, kicks into action soon after this speech, on Memorial Day, when New York singles start their engines and head for the Hamptons looking for love, or, as one entrepreneur puts it, "something that will last a minute and a half." This is pretty much the Hamptons we know and hate. We get some of the other Hamptons—Kopple tracks the last days of a police lieutenant before he retires, and she follows a local singer named Nancy Atlas as she prepares to quit her waitressing job and release a CD—but not in much depth. Yes, we meet a farmer, but only twice and not for very long. In one scene, fishermen are shown at sea, shovelling their catch back into the water; one of them holds a fish up to the camera and complains that, though it's a perfectly good, edible fish, they aren't allowed to keep it and sell it. But we never find out why; there's a story there somewhere, but it isn't in this movie. Occasionally, there's some sense of continuity between scenes, some sense of how this place *works*. A woman who runs a seafood market talks about how the community helped her after her husband died; while she's talking, people in the shop are preparing food for a party that night at the Hiltons' (the parents of the aforementioned sisters); and then the camera shows us the party. But, for the most part, Kopple takes us places for only a brief stopover: a scene of sport fishermen shouting "Yeah, baby!" whenever they catch something segues into a clip of a heavyset old black woman in a parking lot putting a catfish she just caught into a plastic bucket. Most of her children were born right here, in Southampton Hospital, she says. Where are they now? Who knows—the woman gets only twenty seconds of airtime, never to be seen again. Then, after a one-minute visit to a town meeting about pollution, we return to the husband huntress, who is with her housemates, primping for a party, then driving to the party, and dancing at the party. (This, as well as every other scene that includes Ms. Desperate, could be right out of "The Real World" or "The Bachelor," the grotesque, addictive reality show that was a recent hit on ABC.) There's an overemphasis on a very narrow definition of "good times" in "The Hamptons," because, after all, nearly nine months of the year are missing from the film—as if the area were a Brigadoon that vanished after Labor Day.



The powerful publicist Peggy Siegal is a co-producer of the documentary, and no doubt she helped reel in some of the interviewees, but they are largely people who have something to gain from the publicity, such as the young entrepreneur who sets up oxygen bars at clubs; Jason Binn, the publisher of the magazine *Hamptons* (we hear him saying to someone in Donald Trump's office, "O.K., how do we make sure he comes to my party tonight?"); and even, I suppose, the polo player who wants to change the image of his sport because, "unfortunately, polo is often stereotyped as this sort of social, rich man's sport." At the time, Siegal was in business with the publicist Lizzie Grubman—an alliance that ended late last year—but Kopple does not shy away from covering Grubman's notorious accident, in which she left the scene after the S.U.V. she was driving rammed into a crowd at a night club in Southampton, injuring sixteen people.

Kopple's tour guide in "The Hamptons" is Steven Gaines, the author of the entertaining Hamptons social history "Philistines at the Hedgerow." Gaines, who appears in the film probably more than any other person, plays an interesting, ambiguous role. We see him caring for his dying dog with great tenderness, and bringing flowers to a woman who gave him some helpful advice about the dog—a lovely gesture, which I don't think was for the benefit of the camera. But while Gaines, who is the only writer interviewed in the movie (no Peter Matthiessen, for instance, who not only used to work as a fisherman on the South Fork but wrote a book about South Fork fishermen), seems to be speaking freely and openly—at a polo match, he says, "There are so many hot girls here it makes me wish I was straight"—he plays it safe most of the time, glorifying the status quo, whatever it may be. He appears to travel in many different circles, and he's learned from the mistakes of Truman Capote, whose fictionalized account of his socialite friends in *Esquire* got him forcibly ejected from his high chair at the table of the ladies who lunch. On the phone with someone after the Grubman incident, Gaines serves up verbal oatmeal: "I just think that, you know, she's blond and she's kinda pretty, and her father was powerful and rich, and this terrible tragedy happened." And, the day that the much loved local restaurateur Jeff Salaway dies in a car accident (just a few hours after he was interviewed for this movie), Gaines gets off the phone after giving a friend the news and says, "People are already worried what to wear to the funeral." Why, then, is Gaines hanging out with such people, and why, if he is, is he the central figure in Kopple's film? A headline in the *Times* once referred to Kopple, on the basis of her earlier work, as "a poet of the proletariat"; in "The Hamptons," she is more a promoter of the privileged. She has taken the perfect storm and reduced it to a tempest in a teacup. ♦

BOOKS

THE FALL

Bob Kerrey's Vietnam.

BY ELIZABETH KOLBERT

On October 17, 1944, John Kerrey, an American soldier serving in the Philippines, died for no particularly good reason. That morning, Kerrey, who had survived the fall of Bataan and two and a half years of guerrilla fighting on Luzon, had set out with four other servicemen from their command post to rendezvous with an American submarine on Dibut Bay. Kerrey's companions travelled by land and made it safely to the submarine, but Kerrey chose to go in an outrigger with a Filipino guide. It is unclear whether he was killed by his guide, or fell to the Japanese, or simply drowned in the rough sea beyond the bay.

At the start of "When I Was a Young Man" (James H. Silberman/Harcourt; $26), former Senator Bob Kerrey explains that he intended in the book to tell the story of his uncle John, whose very existence was kept hidden from him until he was ten years old. But things didn't work out that way: instead of being about John and the Philippines, the book is about Bob and Vietnam. Kerrey offers several explanations for the shift in focus, but he never mentions the obvious reason—the first lapse in a book whose subject turns out to be not meaningless death but guilt and evasion.

For many years, Bob Kerrey seemed the ideal hero for a non-ideal war; for a brief moment in 1992, it even appeared that this might be enough to carry him to the White House. In serving his country, Kerrey had suffered terribly—he lost half his right leg to a Vietcong grenade—and in recognition of his bravery he had been awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor. Yet he never liked to talk about what had happened to him. This reticence was taken as evidence of his reservations about Vietnam—he eventually came to oppose the war—and it allowed him to be embraced both by those who had supported American involvement and by those who had protested against it. It now appears, however, that there were other reasons for his diffidence.

Kerrey's tour of duty as a Navy lieutenant lasted only a couple of months, and during that time he completed just two missions. The first was a midnight raid on the tiny village of Thanh Phong, on the South China Sea. Officially, this mission resulted in the deaths of twenty-one Vietcong, and Kerrey was awarded a Bronze Star for his role in it. In fact, as the *Times Magazine* reported last year, the mission appears to have been something closer to a massacre. Kerrey and his squad, expecting to surprise a group of guerrilla fighters in Thanh Phong, found only women, children, and old men. Either out of fear—some have said that the squad was fired on—or out of cold calculation, they gunned down more than a dozen villagers before retreating to the port of Vung Tau.

The *Times'* account was nearly three years in the making. It relied heavily on the recollections of one of the members of Kerrey's platoon, who, as the *Times* acknowledged, had a history of drinking problems, but also on the memories of other participants in the raid, including Kerrey himself. A week and a half before the article was due to appear, Kerrey, who by this point had left the Senate to become the president of New School University, made his first public statement about the mission. Addressing students at the Virginia Military Institute, he acknowledged, at least implicitly, that much of what happened at Thanh Phong had been suppressed. "I have been haunted by it for thirty-two years," he said. In an "Author's Note" appended to "When I Was a Young Man," Kerrey maintains that it was the process of writing the book that prompted him, at long last, to speak about the deaths he had caused.

Kerrey accepted the Medal of Honor from President Nixon with mixed feelings.

CORBIS SYGMA

Kerrey grew up in Lincoln, Nebraska, a place where, by his account, very little seems to have happened. As he describes himself, he was drawn to romantic possibilities—he longed to be a star football player and loved to go to the movies—and, at the same time, to comfortable obliviousness. His early life revolved around school, church, and sports, and when it came time for college it never occurred to him to do anything but stay in Lincoln and enroll at the University of Nebraska, where he joined

Phi Gamma Delta and trained to become a pharmacist. Kerrey barely noticed the civil-rights movement, and, after spending a summer living with a friend's conservative family, registered to vote as a Republican. In 1964, when he was twenty-one, he cast his first ballot, for Barry Goldwater. (Four years later, he voted for Richard Nixon, sincerely believing, he writes, that Nixon had a "secret plan" to end the Vietnam War.)

Kerrey was twenty-two when he was ordered to report to his local draft board. An asthma sufferer, he probably could have avoided going to Vietnam had he sought a letter from his doctor, but he says he never considered this an option. Instead, he preëmpted the draft by enlisting in the Navy; he had just read "The Caine Mutiny" and cites the story as the "decisive factor." At Officer Candidate School, Kerrey was given a chance to enroll in an underwater demolition program, an opportunity he accepted for no other reason than that it was presented as a challenge. From there, it was just another short, unreflective step to becoming a Navy SEAL, and still more sophisticated training in sabotage and assassination. Thus Kerrey depicts himself sleepwalking into mortal danger. This would make him a sympathetic figure, in an antiheroic sort of way, if the stakes, for him and for others, had not been so high. "To say that I barely had a clue about what I would be doing in Vietnam understates the case," he writes.

Kerrey shipped out in January, 1969, and immediately assumed command of a platoon based at Cam Ranh Bay, a hundred and ninety miles northeast of Saigon. SEAL teams operated more or less on their own authority in Vietnam, and Kerrey's had no particular assignment. First, it set up some ambushes, none of which proved productive. Kerrey then decided to attempt the midnight raid on Thanh Phong, where intelligence suggested that a high-level meeting of Vietcong would be taking place.

Kerrey clearly knows the conventions of war stories, and is able, even three decades later, to recall small, telling details. "We came to the canal and hid in the buffalo grass in a semicircle facing outward for security," he writes, describing the end of the raid. "We heard the deep-throated boat engines approach and signaled our location with a small, red handheld light. When the bow of the boat touched shore, we pulled ourselves on board. I could feel the screws turning in reverse and the bow swing out and away from land."

But Kerrey's memory—or, at least, his willingness to write about what he remembers—is selective. This is how he describes the start of the raid, when the killing began: "My point man led the way. He came to a house he said he believed was occupied by sentries. We had been trained that in such situations it would be too risky to move forward knowing that they would warn the men in the village unless we killed them or aborted the mission. I did not have to give an order to begin the killing but I could have stopped it and I didn't." A far more vivid rendering of this same scene appeared in the *Times'* story. There were apparently five people in the house, one of them an older man. He put up a struggle and had to be subdued. According to one participant, Kerrey put his knee on the man's chest while someone else slit his throat. (Kerrey has denied this.) The four other occupants—two women and two men, by one account; a woman and three small children, by another—were taken off and killed separately.

Kerrey knew that his mission had been compromised by the slaying of the suspected sentries—"I no longer believed we had the element of surprise on our side," he writes. But, for reasons that he leaves unspecified, he and his men pressed ahead anyway. In the village, they found that the Vietcong meeting, if it had ever taken place, had already broken up. More than a dozen women and children, roused from their beds, gathered in front of their homes. "We had two choices: withdraw or continue to search houses in the dark," Kerrey writes. "Before we could make the decision, someone shot at us from the direction of the women and children, trapping them in a crossfire. We returned a tremendous barrage of fire and began to withdraw, continuing to fire. I saw women and children in front of us being hit and cut to pieces. I heard their cries and other voices in the darkness as we made our retreat to the canal." This is Kerrey's only description of the massacre, and it leaves his position obscure. He doesn't deny having killed anyone, but he doesn't exactly acknowledge it, either: "we" returned the fire; "I" saw people being cut to pieces. Ultimately, he reports himself as a casualty: "The young, innocent man who went to Vietnam died that night."

In "The Fall," Albert Camus tells the story of a drowning. Walking home late one rainy night, the story's narrator is crossing the Seine on the Pont Royal when he passes a woman in black leaning over the railing. A few moments later, he hears a body striking the water, then cries that grow increasingly faint. "The silence that followed, as the night suddenly stood still, seemed interminable," he recalls years later. "I wanted to run and yet didn't stir. I was trembling, I believe from cold and shock. I told myself that I had to be quick and I felt an irresistible weakness steal over me. I have forgotten what I thought then. 'Too late, too far . . . ' or something of the sort. I was still listening as I stood motionless. Then, slowly under the rain, I went away. I informed no one."

When Kerrey returned from Vietnam, he read "The Fall," and it made, he says, a big impression. At first, he assumed that the title referred to the fall of the figure from the bridge, but then, he explains, he decided that it actually referred to the narrator. "He believed he was a brave man, capable and willing to risk his life for another," Kerrey writes. "He believed he would choose to do the right thing. But when the moment came, he was a coward. The fall was his fall from grace." Kerrey wants us to know that he was tormented by what happened in Thanh Phong, and the allusion to "The Fall" is part of this endeavor. But, as such, the gesture is self-defeating: even in metaphoric terms, gunning down a village of women and children is not the same as failing to jump into a river to prevent a suicide.

Shortly after the massacre, Kerrey led his squad on a similar raid, this one with disastrous consequences for himself. The squad was trying to capture a band of Vietcong saboteurs on an island in the bay of Nha Trang when a fire fight broke out, and a grenade exploded next to Kerrey's outstretched foot. Kerrey tells us that he viewed his hideous injury—eventually, his leg was amputated just below the knee—as punishment for the killings at Thanh Phong. The letters he subsequently wrote home to his parents are filled with strained jocularity, promising stories that will "keep you all in stitches when I return." After a long and painful recovery at a naval hospital in Philadelphia, he moved back to Nebraska. He writes that he considered talking with several people about what had happened—his parents, his minister, two women he met in an accounting class—but each time decided against it. Indeed, if he ever discussed the massacre before the author of the *Times* account, Gregory Vistica, confronted him, he does not say with whom, and certainly he never seems to have told anyone who might have made life more difficult for him. A year after the mission, he accepted the country's highest award for bravery, travelling to Washington to receive the honor, because, he says, he didn't want to disappoint anyone.

"When I Was a Young Man" doesn't follow Kerrey's life past 1970. Kerrey spent the next twelve years building up a chain of restaurants and health clubs, before entering politics. As governor of Nebraska, then a United States senator, and, finally, a Presidential candidate, he rarely spoke about his war record, yet, as he surely knew, it was this record that gave him a moral edge on almost every candidate he ever ran against. The only mention he makes of his political career is on the last page. One night in his Washington apartment, he recalls, he had a dream in which he saw a figure struggling in the water. In the dream, he moves to help the man, whom he recognizes as his uncle John. Kerrey tells John that he is sorry, that he knows "he died because of a bad choice." Silently, John leads him up the beach to a hiding place. "He motions to me to take a seat and he sits down beside me. No words pass between us."

WONDER AS WANDER

At dusk, on those evenings she does not go out,
my mother potters around her house.
Her daily helpers are gone, there is no one
there, no one to tell what to do,
she wanders, sometimes she talks to herself,
fondly scolding, sometimes she suddenly
throws out her arms and screams—high notes
lying here and there on the carpets
like bodies touched by a downed wire,
she journeys, she quests, she marco-polos through
the gilded gleamy loot-rooms, who is she.
I feel, now, that I do not know her,
and for all my staring, I have not seen her,
like the song she sang, when we were small,
I wonder as I wander, out under the sky,
how Jesus the Saviour was born for to die
for poor lonely people, like you, and like I—
on the long evenings alone, when she delays
and delays her supper, walking the familiar
halls past the mirrors and night windows,
I wonder if my mother is tasting a life
beyond this life—not heaven, her late
beloved is absent, her father is absent,
and her staff is absent, maybe this is earth
alone, as she had not experienced it,
as if she is one of the poor lonely people,
as if she is born to die. I hold fast
to the thought of her, wandering in her house,
a luna moth in a chambered cage.
Fifty years ago, I'd squat in her
garden, with her Red Queens, and try
to sense the flyways of the fairies as they kept
the pollen flowing on its local paths,
and our breaths on their course of puffs—they kept
our eyes wide with seeing what we
could see, and not seeing what we could not see.

—*Sharon Olds*

Kerrey maintains that what happened at Thanh Phong was not considered particularly unusual in Vietnam. This is probably true, and although it hardly justifies the massacre, it certainly raises questions about who, exactly, was responsible: the men crouching in the dark or the leaders of the country that sent them there. The choices Kerrey faced that night lie so far beyond ordinary experience that his actions, while painful to contemplate, are difficult to judge. What happened afterward is another matter. Allowing others to think us braver, nobler, and more selfless than we are is, after all, an everyday occurrence, and in this more prosaic sense "The Fall" turns out to be a pertinent text. Camus's narrator, far from thinking himself brave, as Kerrey remembers, knows that his claims to moral superiority are a sham, and that confessing to this is just another act of bad faith. "We merely wish to be pitied and encouraged in the course we have chosen," the narrator says. "In short, we should like, at the same time, to cease being guilty and yet not to make the effort of cleansing ourselves." ♦

BRIEFLY NOTED

The Russia Hand: A Memoir of Presidential Diplomacy, *by Strobe Talbott (Random House; $29.95).* Among journalists, Nelson Strobridge Talbott III was always considered a breed apart, a descendant of the Wise Men generation; whether at the Council on Foreign Relations or at a summit meeting in a European capital, Talbott carried himself with an effortless gravitas. When Bill Clinton was elected President in 1992, he made Talbott, who had been a close friend at Oxford, his point man on Russian affairs. Historians will probably find Talbott's insider account of post-Cold War diplomacy far too unquestioning of an American policy that, in the name of supporting a fragile democracy, tended to forgive Boris Yeltsin everything, even when he was at his reeling, Chechen-shelling worst. In this memoir, Clinton is always sagely reminding everyone that "Ol' Boris" had the toughest job in the world, and needed all the support the United States could provide. Talbott shows no less fealty to Clinton. And, while that may arouse doubts, there is something—after so many volumes of assault from Cabinet officers, image polishers, and other satraps—incidentally moving about this book; far from being a definitive history, it is instead a fascinating gesture of friendship sustained and maintained.

The Cadence of Grass, *by Thomas McGuane (Knopf; $24).* McGuane's ninth novel begins as a soap opera, with the members of a monumentally dysfunctional family wrestling over their shares of the deceased patriarch's estate. Representatives of an American West gone to seed, the Whitelaw daughters and their husbands drink too much, sleep around, and try to gouge each other out of their inheritances. But if the Whitelaws are what the West is, Bill Champion—the family's old ranch hand—is what it might have been, and as the novel shifts its attention to Champion, it becomes an evocation of a lost world. The real engine of the book is not plot, though, but language: McGuane's sentences are like no one else's, crisp and spare, yet somehow baroque, and he perpetually balances the picaresque against the sublime. "It was one thing to be observant," the ne'er-do-well Paul Crusoe thinks, "and quite another to be absolutely awake."

A Child's Book of True Crime, *by Chloe Hooper (Scribner; $24).* Kate Byrne, a primary-school teacher in Tasmania, is having an affair with the father of one of her students. But even as she obligingly plays the part of the slutty young mistress, she waits, like a child, to be punished; her lover's wife has just written a highly colored account of a local sex crime, and Kate is convinced that the older woman means to harm her. Hooper's first novel is at once suspenseful and self-conscious; crammed with fragments of animal fables, erotic fantasies, deaths remembered and foretold, it becomes a witty and unsettling meditation on innocence and experience. There is a deliberate cheekiness to Kate's conflation of sex and violence, and yet her litany of gruesome possibilities brings to mind a child's incantation, an attempt to ward off the darkness.

A House Unlocked, *by Penelope Lively (Grove; $23).* The British novelist Penelope Lively spent her early childhood in Egypt, but it was her school holidays at Golsoncott—a manor house that her grandparents bought in the wilds of Somerset, in 1923—that shaped her life. In this slim, beguiling book, Lively describes the contents and customs of the house: its silver cupboard stocked with napkin rings; the sampler stitched by her grandmother (it featured portraits of refugee children billeted in the house during the blitz); the gong stand and the potted-meat jars. By meticulously tracing the provenance of these objects, she re-creates the life they once furnished.

U.S.A. HATED?

A Case History

Like the trade winds blowing Michael Dougherty's *To Steal A Kingdom*... brings a breath of fresh air to Hawaii studies, where the cloud of missionary filial piety has been conspicuous. Dougherty, a free-lance writer and filmmaker, relied heavily upon documentary sources compiled over a period of twenty years and, as much as possible, let historical personages speak for themselves. Voices harmonizing with him include Herman Melville, Mark Twain, Robert Louis Stevenson and the deposed Queen Liliuokalani. They are the heroes. The villains are five generations of the Gerrit P. Judd family and other American missionary / businessmen who nearly wiped out the Hawaiians while aiding and abetting the theft of the kingdom and then covering their thieving tracks by largely controlling documentary sources and the writing of Hawaiian history. [In] its factual and logical questioning of the process by which much of Hawaiian history has been written lies the ***signal*** contribution of this important probing work.

–*The Journal of American History* ABRIDGED

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THE ART WORLD

INTO THE RAINBOW

Brice Marden's abstractions.

BY PETER SCHJELDAHL

Abstract painting used to be the prow of art history. Now it is a field of special, refined, even snooty taste, like serious jazz. The big values that it once represented, such as the symbolizing of up-to-date consciousness, aren't exactly debunked, but they've become worn smooth from use. Current abstract painting must tout small values—freshness, finesse—merely to stay interesting. Because no major new idea has informed the genre for decades, most abstract painters can't help reshuffling the terms of modern paradigms, from Kandinsky and Mondrian to Pollock, de Kooning, and the early Frank Stella. These and other signs of belatedness may be found in a grand show of new work by Brice Marden, at Matthew Marks's two galleries, in Chelsea. The beauty of the show is partly elegiac, with a sense that the artist is haunted by abstraction's brilliant past. But this is not a weakness. Marden's relationship with history has always been knowing but reserved—diplomatic. The toughly modest, webby style of drawing with paint that he introduced in 1987 looks increasingly like a definitive statement of abstract painting's limitations and possibilities after the collapse of the modern tradition. This show brings the style to perhaps its ultimate stage of development.

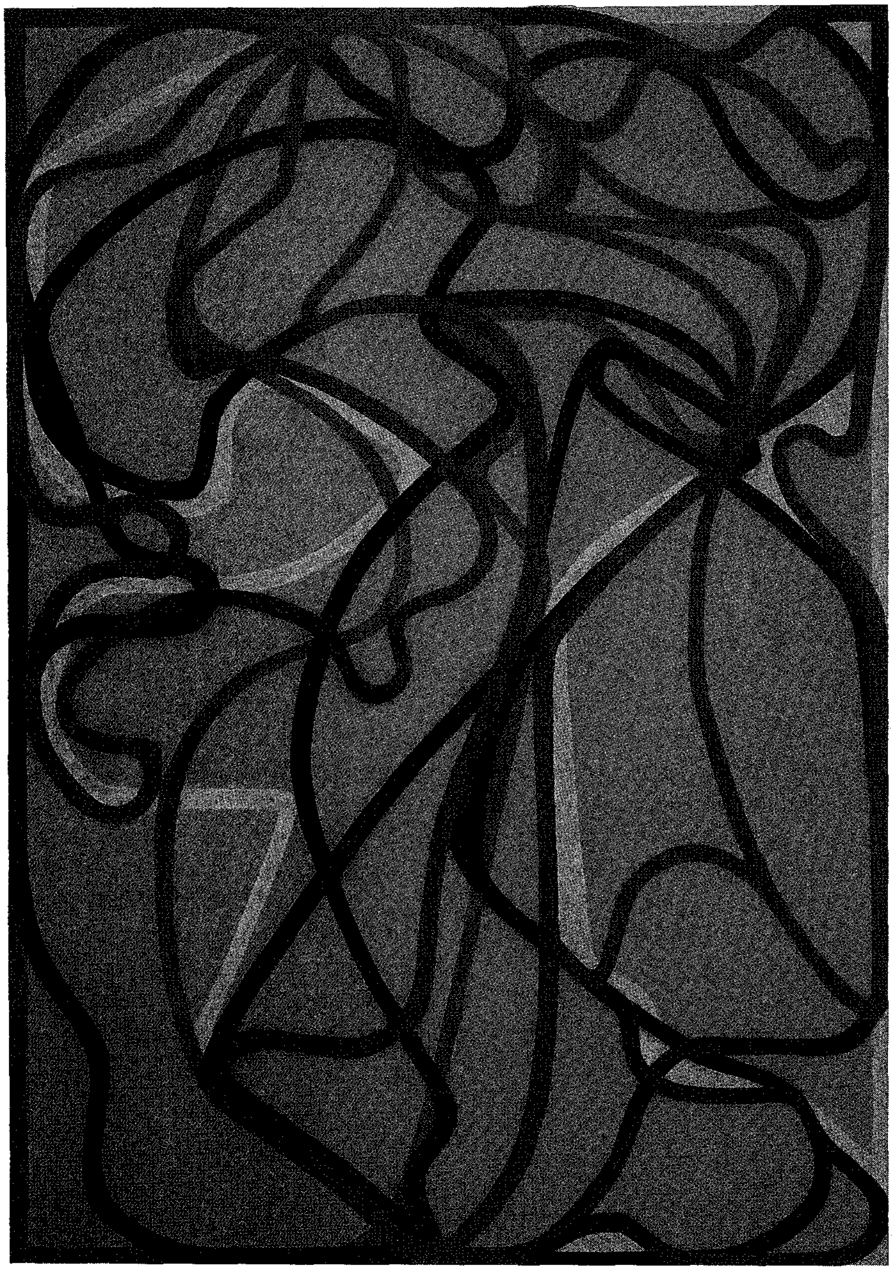
Marden was born in Bronxville, New York, in 1938 and grew up in Westchester. He attended Yale's art school in its mid-sixties glory days, when his fellow-students included Richard Serra, Chuck Close, and Robert Mangold. Marden emerged in New York as one of a number of independent-minded abstract painters—among them Robert Ryman, Agnes Martin, and Mangold—who accepted the reductive, skeptical imperatives of that minimalist era up to a point. For Marden, the point was emotion, and he remained loyal to the Abstract Expressionists' understanding of art as a projection of the self. His early, moody monochromes in oil and beeswax convey a smoldering ardor that is courtly in manner and distraught in tone. For well-disposed viewers, like me, these paintings, whose tender surfaces suggest vulnerable flesh, evoked not only Rothko and Newman but Watteau, Manet, and blue-period Picasso. An air of youth overburdened by sensual experience contributed to the artist's James Dean-like cachet on the New York scene. Marden's persona could become a bit much for some people, as when he entitled a series of abstract drawings "Suicide Notes," or when he was quoted as declaring, "Painting says 'pain' in it." But there has never been any grandiosity in the work itself, which always evinces methodical discipline. If there was a concern about Marden back then, it was for his future. His art seemed fully realized on arrival. Where could it go? The question remained open through the nineteen-seventies and early eighties, as Marden tried, unconvincingly, to give his monochromes an architectural presence by making works of multiple panels. In the mid-eighties, after years of making hundreds of small calligraphic drawings with twigs dipped in ink, he broke through to a new style. In effect, he reëntered serious painting via drawing, which had been excluded from his monochromes.

In the current show, which consists of both paintings and works on paper, the determined abstractness of Marden's recent work allows room for novel hints of figuration. The title of the show, "Attendants, Bears, and Rocks," is somewhat precious. "Attendants" refers to ancient Chinese pottery figures that were placed in tombs to accompany the dead. "Rocks" alludes to Chinese "scholars' rocks"—intricately eroded stones prized as objects of meditation. Marden has drawn abundant inspiration from Chinese culture since the inception of his calligraphic mode of drawing and especially since his triumph, in 1991, at the Dia Center with "Cold Mountain," a series of paintings whose title refers to the verses of Han Shan, a Chinese hermit poet of the eighth century. The "bears" derive from a startling glimpse that Marden had of a bear outside his country studio, in Pennsylvania, a few years ago. The new paintings condense Marden's familiar, meandering brushstrokes into bands of color. The bands read less as expressive gesture than as purposeful design. (The show also contains bristling calligraphic drawings, indicating that Marden's phone line to his unconscious is still open.) Here and there, the bands appear to be describing something—the eccentric contour of a scholar's rock, a bear's shouldering gait—but always with teasing ambiguity.

The big news about these paintings is the drama of their colors, which are the most intense of Marden's career. Each of seven large canvases at the Marks gallery on West Twenty-second Street enlists, in layered patterns of curvy lines, the rainbow's sequence of primaries and secondaries, advancing from violet, which is usually the ground color, through blue, green, yellow, orange, and red. (In one painting, "6 Red Rock 1," orange is the ground color.) No hue is quite pure. The violets fall somewhere between lavender and grape-jelly purple. The yellows tilt toward citron or chartreuse, and the greens favor dusky terre verte. Marden has always been an extraordinary colorist. His early monochromes depended for their power on a poetry of smoky, grayed greens and blues. (Fairfield Porter said about those works, "He paints panels that are all one color, but they are such beautiful colors.") Marden has an instinct for color with something special in it, like the catch in a singer's throat that imbues a note with unexpected feeling. In this show, the colors have a heightened theatrical air—more Maria Callas, less Billie Holiday. Give them time. They accumulate a force of subtle, drenching emotion.

that distance, then go back and look at it in detail where you can begin to answer the questions you've posed at each of these various viewing distances." I'm not alone in instinctively approximating this behavior, and I often take a guilty pleasure in standing aside to watch the similar footwork of other viewers. Giving ourselves over to art may be the least guarded thing that we do in public. Performing Marden's drill to the letter, I gained an unusually powerful comprehension of his new work. As I did my back-and-forth in front of each painting, I felt as though the only difference between the act of my looking at the pictures and his act of painting them was that he had a brush in his hand. Looking at art in this way, I regained a sense of abstraction as the distilled essence of painting.

I was also reminded of how much people used to care about the relative merits of the abstract giants. At one of the Marks galleries, I ran into a curator who mentioned a fierce argument we had once had about who was the better artist, Marden or Ryman (he of the all-white paintings). This brought to mind the only long conversation I ever had with Clement Greenberg, in which Marden was pitted against the color-field paladin Jules Olitski. On both occasions, I had championed Marden's sullen romanticism against the relatively programmatic avant-gardisms of Ryman, an imposing structuralist, and of Olitski, an exponent of Greenberg's formal prescriptions of flatness and "opticality." In those days, your choice of favorite abstract painter spoke volumes about you. To support a particular painter was to endorse a clear interpretation of the present, to vote for a specific vision of the future. Since then, art has lost its prophetic mandate, abstract painting has lost its starring role in art, and the competition among artists is moot. As we recalled the fervor of our argument, the curator and I smiled nostalgically. ♦



In "6 Red Rock 1," a master of mysterious color goes for high drama.

MATTHEW MARKS GALLERY

With such an abundance of color and lines, the pictures ought to look busy, but they don't. They have a calm, hieratic aplomb about them, the effect of their smoothed, matte surfaces and the strict rules governing the lines. They suggest a rigorous musical score that has the contrapuntal density—the dash and the movement—of a fugue. Marden's process is devilishly complex. He begins by freely brushing the networks of colored bands, one over another, on a blank canvas. He then overpaints the whole picture with the ground color, and carefully repaints the bands on top of it, with constant adjustments. (If you look closely, you will notice that ostensibly underlying bands were often added after those that appear to cross them.) Sometimes he repeats the entire procedure more than once, taking photographs at each stage to record marks that he might want to restore after they are effaced. The finished canvases at first recall the mesh of energized skeins of paint in a Pollock; gradually, they take on the firm and exquisite calibration of a Mondrian. By combining improvisation and deliberation so seamlessly, Marden makes one wonder why those activities were ever seen as mutually exclusive.

Marden once said to an interviewer, "A good way to approach a painting is to look at it from a distance roughly equivalent to its height, then double

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From the Times.

But men and women put different imprints on certain genes, and an embryo with all female imprints fails to develop properly, making men necessary.

Now tell us what you really think.

THE THEATRE

INDOORS, OUTDOORS

Hapless high jinks at the Manhattan Theatre Club.

BY NANCY FRANKLIN

I spent a lot of time during Alan Ayckbourn's manic but sodden comedy "Garden," now playing at the Manhattan Theatre Club's Stage II, trying to think of clever ways to combine the words "farce" and "snooze," but it was no use—the only combinations I came up with were about as satisfying as the play itself. And it had all sounded like so much fun: "Garden" is linked with another Ayckbourn play, "House," which is not only set at the same time and place—a late-summer day, at an English country house where a garden fair is to be held—but is running simultaneously with "Garden," on M.T.C.'s main stage, with the same cast. (Theatregoers can see the plays, in either order, on different nights, or see them both on a weekend afternoon and evening, or they can see one play in the afternoon, give their evening tickets away, and go see "Spider-Man.")

Ayckbourn, who has written more than sixty plays—roughly double the output of the prodigious Neil Simon—has toyed with time and space and offstage action before, but "House" and "Garden" are the apotheosis of his experimentations. Needless to say, performing these two plays presents an unusual challenge for the actors, who literally have to run through the lobby—where the production supervisor sits with a stopwatch and coördinates their backing-and-forthing—in order to get to their places on each stage on time. The audience sees no sign of this activity; in "Garden," which I saw first, there are no self-conscious references to what's going on offstage, and if you didn't know that there were people rushing about behind the scenes you wouldn't guess it. In this sense, it all goes off without a hitch, except for one noticeably long scene change in the first act. "Garden" unfolds just like a regulation play, albeit one with explanatory holes in it; though each of the plays is meant to be complete in itself, "Garden" has many puzzling moments of severe undermotivation.

With most of the tiers of the English class system which you might expect to find at a country house represented (and with everyone dressed just right, in Jane Greenwood's costumes), "House" and "Garden" are a sort of "Indoors, Outdoors" version of "Upstairs, Downstairs." In "Garden," the focus is primarily on the indoors people, particularly the philandering Teddy (Nicholas Woodeson), the owner of the house, who appears in the garden in his Wellies to tell Joanna (Veanne Cox), a neighbor and friend of the family, that he's breaking off their affair. Joanna, who seems to have hysterical tendencies—she dives into a rhododendron bush because she hears footsteps while waiting for Teddy, and she will dive into it again before the evening is over—is distraught, so much so that she confesses the affair to Trish (Jan Maxwell), Teddy's wife, who already knows the score, and who coolly orders her to pull herself together by lunchtime: "You can wreck my marriage, but I'll never forgive you if you ruin my luncheon party." (This Cowardly line doesn't come off as well as you might think—it needs to be delivered with false dignity in order to be believable, and Maxwell conveys only genuine dignity.) She insists that Joanna tell her husband, Giles (Michael Countryman), a doctor who's so naïve and trusting that his son, Jake (Carson Elrod), says that if he were presented with evidence that a man had cut his wife's throat he would say, "He was probably showing her his new razor, that's all." Jake has problems of his own: he's in love with Teddy and Trish's daughter, Sally (Bryce Dallas Howard), whose feelings toward him are unclear.

While this two-generation romantic roundelay is being sorted out, Barry and Lindy (John Curless and Ellen Parker), a local couple who have been hired to set up for the fair, arrive, and they provide the sole comic reward of the evening, partly because they actually have something to do—some reality to bump up against. Busying themselves with putting the cakes on the table and setting up a fortune-telling tent, they behave one

Grownups behaving badly in Alan Ayckbourn's "House" and "Garden."

way when dealing with each other and another way entirely when dealing with everyone else. In private, Barry finds fault with everything Lindy does, and she submits meekly to his criticisms; when they talk to other people in the garden, they're endlessly agreeable and deferential, his agreeableness barely masking his class resentment and her singsong chipperness barely masking a multitude of personal resentments. But one's patience, strained right from the beginning of the play by the leaden presence of a surly gardener who won't speak to anyone, simply snaps when a French movie actress—a French movie actress!—shows up at the house and goes through her stunningly hackneyed paces, speaking shrill French at the top of her lungs in an effort to convey madcap vitality and plunging into a life-affirming sexual romp with Teddy that seems to last an *éternité*. (The sight of the chunky Woodeson in his underpants is worth the price of admission—refunded.)

As an audience member, I felt shut out of "Garden," and I'm not sure that there was anything the actors or the director, John Tillinger, could have done to change that. There is a yawning purposelessness to the play, stretching out as far as the eye can see; what the eye *can't* see is where the action really is. "Garden" is, in the truest sense, a backstage comedy.

But hope springs twenty-four hours, so the following night I returned to M.T.C. to see whether "House" in any way redeemed "Garden," whether the diptych was anything more than a gimmick without a cause. This time, the setting was an elegant living room (designed, as was the inviting garden, by John Lee Beatty), with botanical prints and an old family portrait. Trish, who disappeared quickly from "Garden," is more prominent in "House," and early in the play we discover that she stopped talking to Teddy three weeks earlier, and a little later that they haven't slept together in seventeen years. (In the plays' bipolar structure, "House" is the depressive half.) The role of Gavin Ryng-Mayne (Daniel Gerroll), a novelist and political speechwriter of reptilian charm, who says, "Gavin Ryng-Mayne with a 'y,'" every time he introduces himself, is expanded in this play, too. He has come to ask Teddy, who descends from a line of M.P.s, to stand for Parliament, and he whiles away the afternoon seducing Sally and then being beastly to her. He tells Trish that he used to be gay, but "gave it up," and, when she asks why, he says, "I don't know. I think it all just got rather—tedious." Rah-*ther*. If Ayckbourn is trying to say something about how destructively whimsical we are in our relationships—how, like the children dancing around the Maypole in "Garden," we get hopelessly entangled in our own desires—his words are drowned out by the sloshiness of the plot. A triangle involving the gardener, the housekeeper (Patricia Conolly), and her daughter (Laura Marie Duncan), which rings false to begin with, eventually gets sorted out, but it's like a shaggy-dog story—there's no real payoff. There is one moment of truth in "House," when Trish, in a flash of anger, delivers a harsh, insightful lesson to her daughter about respecting other people, but it is an isolated moment, and it comes very late.

When "House" and "Garden" were performed in England, at the theatre that Ayckbourn runs, in Scarborough, and at the Royal National Theatre, there was a sort of third act to these plays—a garden fair was set up in the lobbies, and cast members manned the booths—but no such distraction from the emptiness of the proceedings has been provided at M.T.C. All the care and professionalism lavished on making sure that this train runs on time can't alter the fact that it has no destination. You get more information when you see the second play, but you don't get illumination. It would have been interesting if our assumptions about the characters, based on what we saw in one play, were overturned, or altered in some way when we saw the other, making us realize how little we know about people and their relationships and their history when we see them in only one context. But the surprises that do occur—in "House," it is revealed, for example, that the French actress's chauffeur, a woman dressed in a man's suit and tie, really works for her agent—carry no psychological weight or emotional charge. We already know all we need to about these characters, who are merely variations on staples of English comedy, and the only thing we discover about them is how little we care. ♦

KATHY OSBORN

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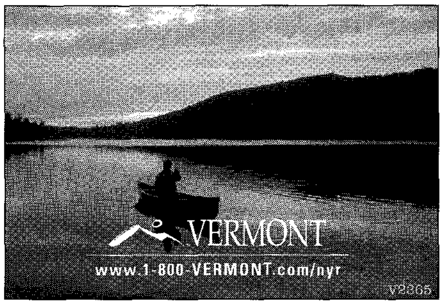

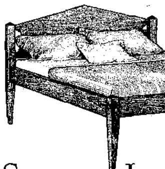

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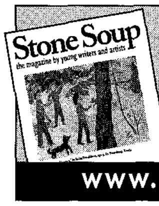

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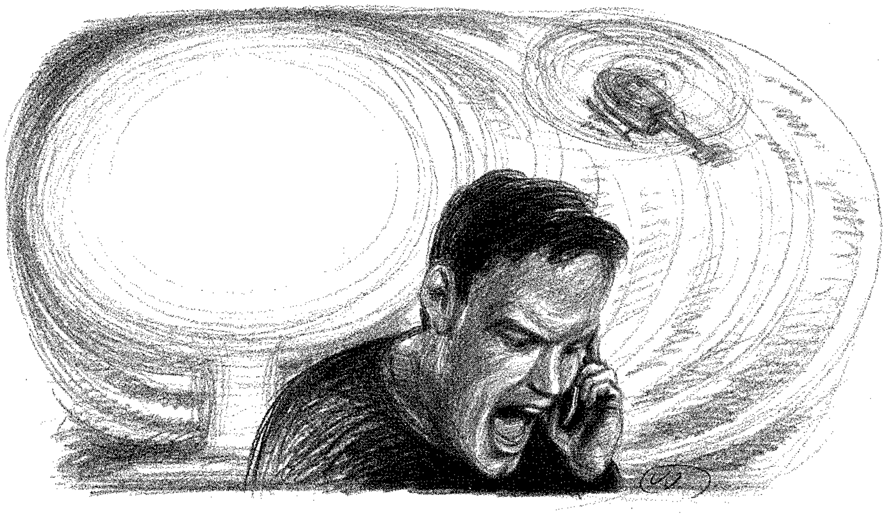
THE CURRENT CINEMA

MEN IN TROUBLE

Heroes from Tom Clancy and Nick Hornby.

BY DAVID DENBY

"The Sum of All Fears" has a female chorus. It's that important a movie. The women's voices soar eloquently over views of Red Square, and everything else in the picture says, "Big movie about a big crisis." This is the latest in the series of super-productions devoted to Tom Clancy's fictional C.I.A. agent Jack Ryan, and it features such familiar sights as mockups of the White House Situation Room and the Kremlin reception halls; an editing scheme that hurls us back and forth across the globe; nuclear missiles rising for takeoff; and an international cast of grimly serious actors speaking in foreign languages and dragging their subtitles from room to room. I suppose we've all enjoyed this sort of thing at times—the intimate contact with national leaders and their harried advisers, the muttered asides and moments of flaring tempers, so reassuringly human and natural in men trying to prevent the end of life as we know it. "The Sum of All Fears" was put into production well before last September, so it's not the fault of the filmmakers (Paul Attanasio and Daniel Pyne wrote the script, and Phil Alden Robinson directed) that actual events have overtaken the portentous clichés. But it very well might be the filmmakers' fault that, as an evocation of danger, the movie seems threatening yet is nowhere near serious or intelligent enough to satisfy our current sense of alarm.



Ben Affleck as the C.I.A. agent Jack Ryan in "The Sum of All Fears."

What to make of this new Jack Ryan? Even though "The Sum of All Fears" is set in the present, the Ryan of this movie (Ben Affleck) is much younger than the Ryans (Alec Baldwin and Harrison Ford) who performed their acts of derring-do in the past. No more than a pup in this installment, Jack is a C.I.A. beginner who has written a long paper on Nemerov (Ciarán Hinds), a dark horse who takes over the Russian Presidency. As a reward, the director of the C.I.A. (Morgan Freeman) plucks Jack out of the crowd of young analysts and throws him

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into the center of an international crisis. Jack is oddly sure of himself; he knows, just *knows*, that the new Russian leader cannot have ordered the catastrophes that take place in the movie—a chemical attack on the city of Grozny, in Chechnya, and a nuclear explosion that kayos part of Baltimore. As we're whipped from the Golan Heights to Moscow to Vienna to Washington, we're a little ahead of Jack, but he catches up pretty fast: The Grozny attack was caused by rogue elements in the Russian armed forces. And the nuke? The work of terrorists, of course. What kind of terrorists? Back in 1991, when Clancy published the novel, the terrorists were a nasty trio—an Arab anti-Zionist, a German leftist, and a Native American activist. Now, in a bold updating, the terrorists have been made into . . . Nazis. Yes, neo-Nazis with elegant manners, swine from a forties Warner Bros. melodrama. The Nazis want to provoke the Americans and the Russians into fighting a nuclear war against each other. At a time when there are warnings of Arab suicide bombers on the Brooklyn Bridge, the Nazis remain the only politically acceptable bad guys in a movie intended for worldwide distribution.

Uneasily, we try to have fun as Robinson and his crew go through the motions of making a big, serious action picture. Fans of Morgan Freeman will enjoy watching him steer Ben Affleck this way and that with a skeptical glance or a few resonant words. There's a good moment in which Freeman's C.I.A. chief, relaxing at a football game, realizes that the President, sitting next to him, is in danger of being killed—the changes in Freeman's face are more exciting than the climax of the movie, in which war is about to break out. But there are a great many oddities and lapses. For instance, these leaders are supposed to be intelligent men, yet the central plot mechanism depends on President Nemerov's willingness to fight a nuclear war with the United States rather than reveal that he has temporarily lost control of a few officers. And Robinson, trying to generate entertainment, treats a nuclear attack on the East Coast as if it were just another disaster, with little of the unique horror that such an event would unleash. I'm afraid it's no longer possible to enjoy world-crisis thrillers like "The Sum of All Fears" as amusingly alarmist entertainment. Watching the brilliant intelligence agents doing their stuff, the audience may reflect that some of the actual men charged with protecting us from danger have not yet learned that two plus two might equal four.

VICTOR JUHASZ

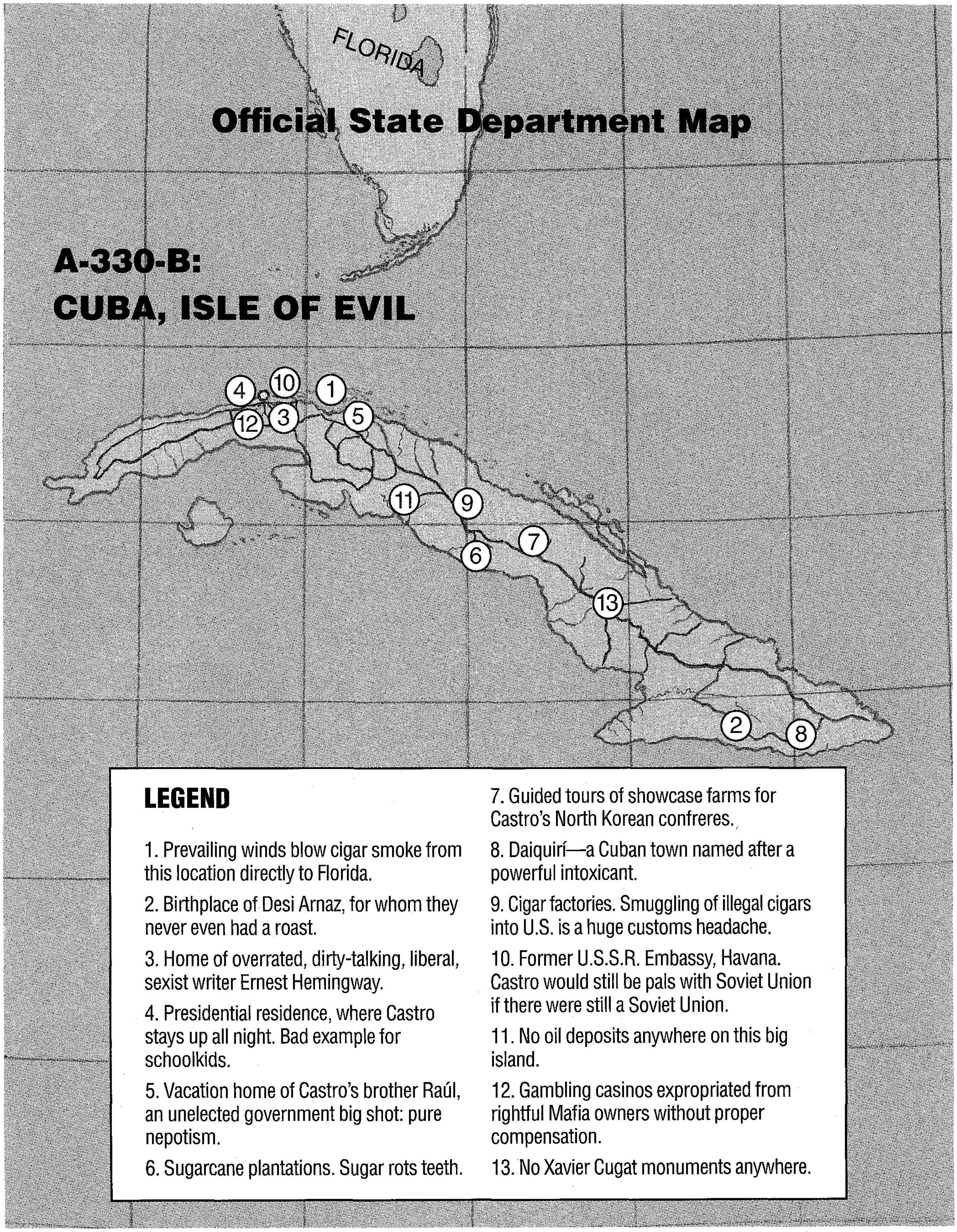
Shy and overpolite, Hugh Grant's characters live in a world in which the simplest conversation runs off the rails. Suddenly puzzled by a question or a demand, Grant stares blankly, his mouth turning down in panic, his eyebrows circumflexing high on his forehead. After a ghastly pause, he stammers and makes a deadpan joke, barely retrieving the situation. Grant has blue eyes, finely cut bow lips, and a full head of brown hair parted in the middle, but the man he plays doesn't know he's handsome. He's the eternal English bachelor—self-deprecating, trifling, impossible to imagine with responsibilities, a job, a family. It's the yearning in Grant's expression—"Save me!" his eyes plead—that makes him a romantic-comedy star. "About a Boy," from the novel by Nick Hornby, seems intended, in part, to continue the work of revising the Hugh Grant character begun in "Bridget Jones's Diary." This time, Grant is older and tougher; his hair has been clipped and spiked; a little malice has crept into his smile. His character, Will Freeman, is calculating and insincere—a dedicated faker. It seems that Will's entire way of life is a fluke. Decades ago, his father wrote a cornball Christmas song that continues to produce sizable royalties, so Will doesn't have to work. Lounging in his chic London flat, he's a kind of media-age Oblomov, defiantly selfish, a connoisseur of CDs and old movies who bestirs himself only to chase girls whom he has no intention of sticking with. Will shares his thoughts with us, taking us into his confidence, and he's almost likable—lazy, but suitably unimpressed with himself.

There's another internal narrative in the movie, spoken by Marcus (Nicholas Hoult), an unhappy twelve-year-old boy whose mother (Toni Collette) is a disaster—a fortyish hippie in feathers who won't stop crying. Nicholas Hoult has very dark hair cut in bangs, and at first he looks like the devil child in one of the "Omen" sequels. But we quickly get used to him; his Marcus is intelligent, and clear-minded about his own situation. Marcus shows up uninvited at Will's pleasure pit and just hangs out. Will, at least, doesn't cry, and he teaches the boy little things, like which sneakers to wear and how to avoid certain kinds of embarrassment at school. Will links his own selfishness with Marcus's needs, and the connection, minor and halfhearted as it is, brings him out of his cave. The directors of "About a Boy," Paul and Chris Weitz—the "American Pie" brothers—have tried not to make a tearjerker, but the structure of the story inevitably encourages shamelessness. The hardy will have to suffer through an awful scene in which Will makes a fool of himself, warbling "Killing Me Softly" at a school assembly in order to save Marcus from singing the song alone.

Much of the movie is better than that: the dialogue, often taken straight from Hornby's book, is unusually tart and knowing. What keeps "About a Boy" down at the level of a middling-good entertainment, however, is not mistakes in tone but an unwillingness to push Hugh Grant as hard as he needs to be pushed. Will lies to women, pretending (as a come-on) that he has a baby boy, and when his lies are discovered he just moves on to the next woman. He meets a single mother played by Rachel Weisz, a dark beauty with a frank stare, and begins the imposture all over again. At that point, "About a Boy" should have turned into a battle between these two. Certainly, a real fight would have made commercial as well as dramatic sense. Instead, the movie glides too easily and quietly to its happy ending, and one feels let down. The other Grant, the irresistible but slippery Cary, was called to account by such strenuous and willful mates as Irene Dunne, Katharine Hepburn, and Ingrid Bergman. But Hugh Grant has never been matched with a woman who directly challenged his oddly recessive charm. Andie MacDowell, in "Four Weddings and a Funeral," kept sleeping with him and disappearing afterward, and Julia Roberts, playing a movie star in retreat in "Notting Hill," was dreamy and soft. The transformation of Hugh Grant won't be complete until some woman grabs him in a way that he just can't escape. ♦

THE BACK PAGE BY BRUCE McCALL

DISPLAY IN A PROMINENT PLACE



Official State Department Map

A-330-B:
CUBA, ISLE OF EVIL

LEGEND

1. Prevailing winds blow cigar smoke from this location directly to Florida.
2. Birthplace of Desi Arnaz, for whom they never even had a roast.
3. Home of overrated, dirty-talking, liberal, sexist writer Ernest Hemingway.
4. Presidential residence, where Castro stays up all night. Bad example for schoolkids.
5. Vacation home of Castro's brother Raúl, an unelected government big shot: pure nepotism.
6. Sugarcane plantations. Sugar rots teeth.
7. Guided tours of showcase farms for Castro's North Korean confreres.
8. Daiquirí—a Cuban town named after a powerful intoxicant.
9. Cigar factories. Smuggling of illegal cigars into U.S. is a huge customs headache.
10. Former U.S.S.R. Embassy, Havana. Castro would still be pals with Soviet Union if there were still a Soviet Union.
11. No oil deposits anywhere on this big island.
12. Gambling casinos expropriated from rightful Mafia owners without proper compensation.
13. No Xavier Cugat monuments anywhere.

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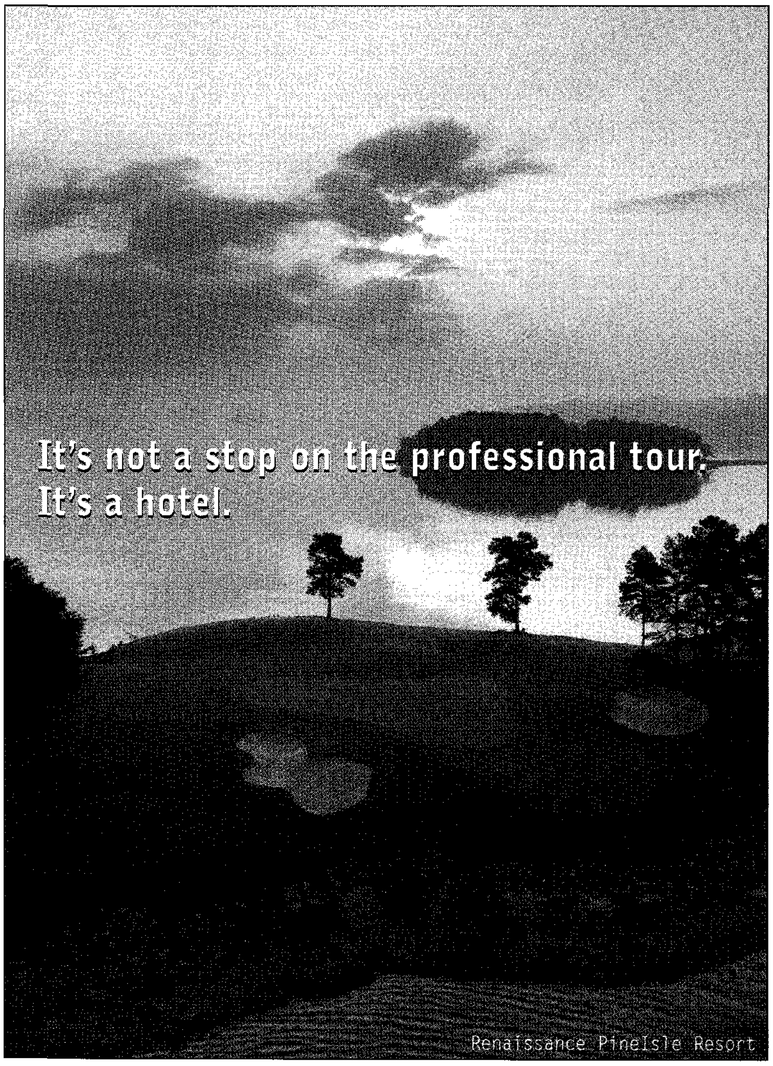
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